

The Daily News Digest

Wednesday, August 25, 2010

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DAILY NEWS DIGEST ARTICLES

August 25, 2010

Section I: Hydrofracking

Arlington considers tighter rules for gas drillers

Fort Worth Star-Telegram, 08/24/10

Summary: Higher road damage fees, time limits on drilling and expanding the number of neighbors notified during the permitting process are among some changes to the city's natural gas drilling ordinance being considered by the City Council. The council held its first discussion Tuesday on recommendations made by the Planning and Zoning Commission this summer to minimize the impact of urban gas drilling on infrastructure, the environment and residents. The council, which last made revisions to the 7-year-old ordinance in 2007, will continue discussing the proposals during the next couple of months.

U.S. Promotes Shale Gas Development For Global Energy Security, Lower Pollution

BNB's Daily Environment, 08/25/10

Summary: The State Department Aug. 24 held its first international conference on the development of global shale gas resources that organizers said could boost the economies of developing countries while reducing pollution in the industrialized world. David L. Goldwyn, State Department coordinator for international energy affairs, said in a [media briefing](#) that 19 countries participated in the Global Shale Gas Initiative, launched by the Obama administration in April. The two-day conference was held at the State Department but was closed to the public. Three U.S. companies—Devon Energy, Chesapeake Energy, and Halliburton—participated in the event to share their experiences in the basic technical aspects of producing natural gas from shale rock formations, officials said.

Little said about health effects of drilling

TheDailyStar.com, 08/24/10

Summary: Although opponents of the "hydrofracking" method of drilling for natural gas have raised many concerns about potential for contamination of water and air, little has been written about what this would mean for human health. Although it is to be hoped that "fracking fluid" would never enter ground water, there are already many examples of communities where this has happened.

Section II: Texas Air

Why The EPA Has Texas Boiling: State Officials Say They're Being Unlawfully Pressed To 'Pledge Their Fealty' To The Agency

National Journal, 08/24/10

Summary: The partisan issue of climate change is also becoming a contest between state and federal authority. Texas is refusing to comply with what state officials regard as potentially unlawful actions on the part of the Environmental Protection Agency. In a letter dated Aug. 2, state officials accused the EPA of "[threatening] to usurp state enforcement authority and to federalize the permitting program of any state that fails to pledge their fealty." The letter is signed by Texas Attorney General Greg Abbott and state Commission on Environmental Quality Chairman Bryan W. Shaw.

Cadre Material Products Receives Air Permit from TCEQ

Business Wire, 08/24/10

Summary: Cadre Material Products, LLC ("Cadre"), an operating company of Cadre Services, Inc., announced today that the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality ("TCEQ") has issued the final air permit for Cadre's proposed multi-million dollar sand mine and processing facility near Voca, Texas, enabling construction to begin immediately. Completion of the plant is expected in the first quarter of 2011. Under the direction of Matt Stafford, general manager, the sand mine and processing plant will be capable of producing over 800,000 tons annually of API-quality proppant used to enhance the production of oil and gas wells.

Section III: Oil Spill

Gulf waste heads to landfills, some with problems

AP, 08/25/10

Summary: The cleanup of history's worst peacetime oil spill is generating thousands of tons of oil-soaked debris that is ending up in local landfills, some of which were already dealing with environmental concerns. The soft, absorbent boom that has played the biggest role in containing the spill alone would measure more than twice the length of California's coastline, or about 2,000 miles. More than 50,000 tons of boom and oily debris have made their way to landfills or incinerators, federal officials told The Associated Press, representing about 7 percent of the daily volume going to nine area landfills.

Oily boom, trash from Gulf spill heads to landfills, some with state environmental issues

AP, 08/25/10

Summary: The cleanup of history's worst peacetime oil spill is generating thousands of tons of oil-soaked debris that is ending up in local landfills, some of which were already dealing with environmental concerns. The soft, absorbent boom that has played the biggest role in containing the spill alone would measure more than twice the length of California's coastline, or about 2,000 miles. More than 50,000 tons of boom and oily debris have made their way to landfills or incinerators, federal officials told The Associated Press, representing about 7 percent of the daily volume going to nine area landfills.

Adviser Says He Raised Concerns to BP on Well

NY Times, 08/24/10

Summary: An official for Halliburton, the company hired by BP to perform a critical step in the process for closing the well connected to the Deepwater Horizon oil rig, testified Tuesday that days before the rig exploded he had raised concerns to BP about its plan for executing the procedure, but that he continued with the job anyway. The official, Jesse M. Gagliano, a shore-based technical adviser, told federal investigators here that he had recommended that BP use a greater number of devices called "centralizers" in the well for the tricky step known as cementing, which is a method of strengthening the well to control pressure from the oil and gas. He said he was ignored. Centralizers help cement flow evenly around an oil well before hardening, and using 6 of them — instead of the 21 that he recommended — made the well more likely to need additional cementing, Mr. Gagliano said.

Job Losses Over Drilling Ban Fail to Materialize

NY Times, 08/24/10

Summary: When the Obama administration called a halt to virtually all deepwater drilling activity in the Gulf of Mexico after the Deepwater Horizon blowout and fire in April, oil executives, economists and local officials complained that the six-month moratorium would cost thousands of jobs and billions of dollars in lost revenue. Oil supply firms went to court to have the moratorium overturned, calling it illegal and warning that it would exacerbate the nation's economic woes, lead to oil shortages and cause an exodus of drilling rigs from the gulf to other fields around the world. Two federal courts agreed. Yet the worst of those forecasts has failed to materialize, as companies wait to see how long the moratorium will last before making critical decisions on spending cuts and layoffs.

A Gulf Science Blackout - Editorial

NY Times, 08/24/10

Summary: The Deepwater Horizon blowout may be capped and the surface oil slick dispersed, but the scientists' job has just begun: hundreds of us are working in and around the gulf to determine the long-term environmental impact of the drilling disaster. Although we are all doing needed research, we're not receiving equal money or access to the affected sites. Those working for BP or the federal government's Natural Resource Damage Assessment program are being given the bulk of the resources, while independent researchers are shoved aside. The problem is that researchers for BP and the government are being kept quiet, and their data is unavailable to the rest of the community. When damages to the gulf are assessed in court or Congress, there might not be enough objective data to make a fair judgment.

Thousands of dead fish reported at mouth of Mississippi

AFP, 08/24/10

Summary: Waves wash oil onto the beach in May 2010 near the south pass of the Mississippi River into the Gulf of Mexico. Thousands of fish have turned up dead at the mouth of Mississippi River, prompting authorities to check whether oil was the cause of mass death, local media reports said Monday. Thousands of fish have turned up dead at the mouth of Mississippi River, prompting authorities to check whether oil was the cause of mass death, local media reports said Monday. The fish were found Sunday floating on the surface of the water and collected in booms that had been deployed to contain oil that leaked from the BP spill in the Gulf of Mexico, the Times-Picayune reported.

New microbe discovered eating Gulf oil spill

MSNBC, 08/24/10

Summary: A newly discovered type of oil-eating microbe suddenly is flourishing in the Gulf of Mexico and gobbling up the BP spill at a much faster rate than expected, scientists reported Tuesday. Scientists discovered the new microbe while studying the underwater dispersion of millions of gallons of oil spilled since the explosion of BP's Deepwater Horizon drilling rig. Also, the microbe works without significantly depleting oxygen in the water, researchers reported in the online journal Sciencexpress.

First catch from the Gulf: Is the seafood safe?

USA Today, 08/24/10

Summary: David Morales set out in the pre-dawn blackness, when the marshes are quiet and the shrimp are busiest. It was the first day of white shrimp season in [Louisiana](#) and Morales' first day back shrimping in the four months since the Gulf oil spill crisis began. He motored the Princess Taylor, a flat, 35-foot shrimping boat he built from scratch, through the dark marshes of Terre aux Boeufs, across Grassy Lake and into this broad salt bay.

Transocean official recalls 'confusion' about test

AP, 08/24/10

Summary: An official says a high-ranking employee indicated a pressure test problem had been resolved hours before BP's Gulf of Mexico well blew out. Daun Winslow works for Transocean, which owns the rig that exploded April 20, killing 11 workers and setting off the Gulf spill. Winslow tells a government panel Tuesday that there was confusion among workers in the drill shack, who were talking before the explosion about a negative pressure test, a procedure typically done before a well is plugged. Winslow says he left while the drill team and tool pushers were discussing the pressure test to avoid disturbing them at a time of critical decision making.

Coast Guard Plans Additional Hearings On Deepwater Horizon in New Orleans

BNA's Daily Environment, 08/24/10

Summary: The joint U.S. Coast Guard-Bureau of Energy Management, Regulation, and Enforcement investigative panel expects to hold several more rounds of hearings in New Orleans before preparing a final report on the cause of the Deepwater Horizon rig accident in the Gulf of Mexico that killed 11 workers April 20, U.S. Coast Guard spokeswoman Sue Kerver said Aug. 23. The final report is due to the Coast Guard and the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, Regulation, and Enforcement for approval in late January, Kerver told BNA. Once approved, the final investigative report will be available to the public.

7 in intensive care after Ala. ammonia leak

AP, 08/24/10

Summary: Seven people are in intensive care a day after an ammonia leak at a coastal Alabama plant that freezes chickens. About 130 people have sought treatment since ammonia spilled Monday at Millard Refrigerated Services in Theodore, creating a vapor cloud that also caused respiratory problems for people working nearby. Officials say four people were in ICU at the University of South Alabama Medical Center on Tuesday, and three more were in intensive care at Infirmary West.

Video: Oil spill's effects still felt by Gulf wildlife (with photo gallery)

AL.com, 08/24/10

Summary: While the laughing gull had traces of oil on its body, an injury prevented it from taking wing to get off the island, said Olson, a deputy project leader with the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service assigned to help with the recovery of oiled birds. Still, officials said that while oil is no longer gushing into the Gulf of Mexico, wildlife along the Gulf Coast continues to feel the spill's effects. "We've been finding birds every day in the bay," said U.S. Fish & Wildlife biologist Deirdre Whelan of Maine.

Fly, my pretties!

AL.com, 08/24/10

Summary: The good news is, many of the oiled birds from the Gulf have been saved, cleaned, rehabilitated and are now being set free. Why not put 'em to work? What better messengers to potential tourists that the Gulf is open for business than those awesome pelicans. Fly, my pretties. Bring them money-spendin' tourists back here where they belong.

What To Do With Trash Left Behind In Gulf Cleanup?

NPR, 08/23/10

Summary: The cleanup effort from the Gulf of Mexico oil spill has left behind more than 45,000 tons of garbage. That includes used boom, stained clothing from cleanup workers, tar balls and other trash. And now come questions of where to put that trash. Is it safe for the local landfill? Melissa Block talks to Darryl Malek-Wiley of the Sierra Club in New Orleans about taking out the trash from the Gulf.

Alabama: Ammonia Leak Sickens 120

AP, 08/23/10

Summary: More than 120 people were sickened Monday by the leak of ammonia at the Millard Refrigerated Services plant in Theodore. Hospital officials in Mobile said 29 people were admitted, including four in intensive care. Scores of people were forced to remain in their homes and at a school after the leak was reported. The leak also forced workers to evacuate one of BP's main staging areas for the Gulf of Mexico oil spill cleanup. BP said dozens of cleanup workers from its Theodore site were among those taken to hospitals.

Louisiana oysters back on the market - but what's in store next year?

Fort Worth Star-Telegram, 08/23/10

Summary: Louisiana oysters are back, along with shrimp, creating a collective sigh of relief for local restaurants that depend on Gulf seafood. But supplies are still short and prices high, and production next year might be hurt by the very cleanup efforts meant to save oyster grounds during BP's 120-day Deepwater Horizon oil spill. Flying Fish, a Dallas-based chain with six restaurants stopped offering oysters on the half shell for nearly two months during the spill.

Deep Water Dead Zone Predicted in the Gulf

Discovery News, 08/23/10

Summary: The oil gusher on the Gulf seabed may be stopped, but much of the spilled oil still lurks in a plume of oil and dissolved methane gas 3,200-4,300 feet below the surface. New research predicts that this plume will likely create a low-oxygen "dead zone" inhospitable to life in these deep waters, as microbes consume the oil and gas entrained in the plume. The cold temperatures in the plume will slow the growth of the microbes compared to microbes acting at the surface.

Selling Florida's Gulf Coast Beaches

Newsweek, 08/22/10

Summary: It's been a tough summer for tourism along Florida's Gulf Coast, which has been suffering since the start of the Deepwater Horizon oil spill in late April. Although surface oil did little damage to beaches in the Panhandle, pictures of oil-bathed birds and blackened sand fueled misconceptions and kept many visitors away. But President Obama's visit to Panama City Beach last weekend and some last-minute summer deals may help attract a new wave of vacationers to the Sunshine State.

Section IV: Other

Responsible Parties to Pay \$6.3 Million For Radiation Cleanup at Gulf Nuclear Site

BNA's Daily Environment, 08/25/10

Summary: Halliburton Energy Services and other responsible parties have agreed to reimburse the U.S. government and the state of Texas a total of \$6.3 million for removal of radioactive material at three Texas sites collectively known as the Gulf Nuclear Site (United States and State of Texas v. Halliburton Energy Services, S.D. Texas, No. 4-07-cv-3795, consent decree lodged 8/19/10). A notice scheduled for publication Aug. 25 in the Federal Register said EPA will be repaid nearly \$6 million and Texas will get \$325,000 under terms of a proposed consent decree lodged Aug. 19 in the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Texas.

Five years post-Katrina: Record asthma numbers led to new program

SmartPlanet.com, 08/25/10

Summary: In a city already plagued with high rates of childhood asthma, Hurricane Katrina changed the landscape of the disease in New Orleans. Major flooding led to mold, which led to a significant number of children developing asthma symptoms for the first time.

Voters turn down water, sanitation increases

The Norman Transcript, 08/25/10

Summary: Norman voters emphatically voted down water and trash rate hikes Tuesday after months of courting by city officials and members of the Norman City Council. According to the Cleveland County Election Board, the proposed rate hike for the sanitation fund failed, but not as badly as the proposed water rate increase. In total, 58.85 percent of voters, or 5,302 residents, voted against the trash rate hike, while only 41.15 percent voted in favor of it.

Survey: Americans clueless on how best to save energy

USA Today, 08/24/10

Summary: Many Americans remain clueless about how best to save energy, focusing more on small behavior changes such as turning off lights than on efficiency efforts such as using compact fluorescent light bulbs that have far greater impact, a new survey shows. The largest group, nearly 20%, cited turning off lights as the single best approach although it reduces energy use relatively little, according to the Columbia University survey of 505 American adults in 34 states published last week in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences.

White House: Energy stimulus is working

The Hill, 08/24/10

Summary: A White House report unveiled Tuesday says tens of billions of dollars in stimulus energy funding is helping to greatly expand deployment of technologies such as solar power, "smart" electrical meters and advanced batteries. The Obama administration is touting the projects as Republicans are increasingly charging that the big 2009 stimulus package was ineffective and continuing attacks on the White House economic team. Recent reports by the Energy Department's inspector general also cited problems with distribution and use of the stimulus dollars, including "prevalent and widespread" spending delays.

Are Chemical Companies Gaming the Carbon Credit System?

Reuters, 08/24/10

Summary: A controversy is brewing over whether some chemical companies are abusing a program that gives them carbon credit revenues for destroying a potent greenhouse gas created as a by-product in their operations. At issue is whether some companies are intentionally overproducing trifluoromethane (HFC-23) in order to destroy it and generate certified emissions reduction (CER) units under the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM). HFC-23 projects account for more than half of all CDM carbon credits sold to date. The CDM Executive Board said last week it would postpone re-issuing more CERs to five HFC-23 projects until an investigation is completed.

Carbon trade lobby calls for rule clarity from EU

Reuters, 08/24/10

Summary: An emissions trading lobby group has called for the European Commission to clarify rules on UN-backed carbon offset use in the third phase of its emissions trading scheme in order to boost ebbing market confidence. In an open letter to EU Climate Commissioner Connie Hedegaard on Tuesday, the International Emissions Trading Association urged the commission to rule the number and types of offsets that scheme participants can use between 2013-2020 should the bloc adopt a deeper 2020 emissions cut target.

NM ranchers sue over changes in wolf program

San Luis Obispo Tribune, 08/24/10

Summary: Ranching groups and two southern New Mexico counties are suing over a program that's reintroducing Mexican gray wolves into the wild in New Mexico and Arizona. Their lawsuit alleges the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the state Department of Game and Fish have violated federal law by altering program rules without a new environmental review. The lawsuit asks a federal judge to stop the changes until the agencies comply with the law.

Scene of Midwest's Worst Oil Spill – Sleepless Nights and Black Goo

Circle of Blue WaterNews, 08/23/10

Summary: Michigan's LaSusa brothers Sam, 17, and Michael, 20, traveled to communities affected by the Enbridge pipeline rupture along the Kalamazoo River in late July. They met with local landowners and clean-up volunteers to find out how people responded to the Midwest's worst oil spill.

Wastewater project under way in Seneca

NeoShoDailyNews.com, 08/23/10

Summary: Preliminary dirt preparation has started on a wastewater project in the works for seven years. Seneca passed a bond issue nearly two years ago for its construction, but because the Missouri town treats its waste across the border in Oklahoma plans had to go through agencies for both states.

Franklin County issues burn ban

DailyTribune.net, 08/23/10

Summary: County Commissioners issued a burn ban today for Franklin County. According to a spokesman from the Texas Forestry Service, Franklin's burn ban marks the first in the Linden Dispatch Zone, which includes the Northeast Texas counties of Titus, Franklin, Camp, Morris, Cass, Marion, Red River, Upshur, Wood, Harrison, Gregg, and Bowie.

Anxiety still rampant in Katrina kids, study says

AP, 08/23/10

Summary: A startling number of Gulf coast area children displaced by Hurricane Katrina still have serious emotional or behavioral problems five years later, a new study found. More than one in three children studied - those forced to flee their homes because of the August 2005 storm - have since been diagnosed with mental health problems. These are children who moved to trailer parks and other emergency housing. Nearly half of families studied still report household instability, researchers said.

Asarco's costly aftermath: Cleanup first, then long-term planning

El Paso Times, 08/22/10

Summary: Creative uses suggested for the old Asarco smelter include trendy marketplaces and solar farms. But before those dreams are realized, more than a century's worth of toxic waste must be cleaned or contained. In the next few weeks, Project Navigator, a California group responsible for overseeing the cleanup, will send a plan to the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality for approval. A 2009 report by the commission outlined possible remedial actions and their costs. Although Project Navigator is not bound by the recommendations, they were used to determine a cleanup cost of more than \$52 million.

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Star-Telegram

Arlington considers tighter rules for gas drillers

Posted Tuesday, Aug. 24, 2010

BY SUSAN SCHROCK

sschrock@star-telegram.com

ARLINGTON -- Higher road damage fees, time limits on drilling and expanding the number of neighbors notified during the permitting process are among some changes to the city's natural gas drilling ordinance being considered by the City Council.

The council held its first discussion Tuesday on recommendations made by the Planning and Zoning Commission this summer to minimize the impact of urban gas drilling on infrastructure, the environment and residents. The council, which last made revisions to the 7-year-old ordinance in 2007, will continue discussing the proposals during the next couple of months.

One of the main concerns is the amount of time companies can tie up a piece of undeveloped land during the drilling process, which can last for decades. Under the current ordinance, specific use permits do not expire if drilling is started within one year. The recommendation is to set a deadline, perhaps five years, and allow the driller to come back to the council to request an extension after the specific use permit expires.

"You drive around town, you see all kinds of prime land being tied up because of gas well drilling," Mayor Robert Cluck said. "I think the time limit will help us. The drillers will get in and do their job and then leave, and we can use the land for something else."

At-large Councilman Robert Shepard said he would like to see the city offer some kind of incentive to encourage drillers to locate their well sites on the same property when possible.

"It would be better, everybody agrees, to limit the overall number of sites we have," he said.

The city requires cellphone companies to prove they can not share an existing cell tower site before approving a new tower. Something similar could be done for gas drilling, said Jim Parajon, community development and planning director.

Other changes being considered include requiring drill sites to be platted, notifying a larger number of property owners surrounding a proposed drill site during the permitting process, and strengthening the landscaping and screening requirements to help the sites blend in with surrounding properties. The city could also raise the road damage fee, which currently generates only about \$200 per well.

Arlington is not changing the setback distance requirement, which requires wells to be 600 feet from a "protected structure," but it could expand the definition of protected structures beyond houses, churches, schools, hospitals and day-care centers.

Susan Schrock, 817-390-7639

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Energy

U.S. Promotes Shale Gas Development For Global Energy Security, Lower Pollution

The State Department Aug. 24 held its first international conference on the development of global shale gas resources that organizers said could boost the economies of developing countries while reducing pollution in the industrialized world.

David L. Goldwyn, State Department coordinator for international energy affairs, said in a media briefing that 19 countries participated in the Global Shale Gas Initiative, launched by the Obama administration in April.

The two-day conference was held at the State Department but was closed to the public.

Three U.S. companies—Devon Energy, Chesapeake Energy, and Halliburton—participated in the event to share their experiences in the basic technical aspects of producing natural gas from shale rock formations, officials said.

Approximately 10 federal agencies, such as the U.S. Geological Survey and the departments of Commerce, Energy, and Interior, also participated, in addition to several state and local government regulators.

Participating countries included Armenia, Bulgaria, Chile, China, Columbia, Estonia, Georgia, India, Indonesia, Jordan, Lithuania, Morocco, Pakistan, Peru, Poland, Romania, South Africa, Ukraine, and Uruguay, according to a State Department list.

Goldwyn noted that the United States has signed memorandums of understanding with China and India that include assisting in shale gas development (221 DEN A-1, 11/19/09).

The USGS is expected to assist India with a resource assessment to determine the country's shale gas potential, officials said. The first workshop with China is planned for Nov. 9-11.

The conference focused on how to establish a legal and regulatory framework for countries interested in shale gas development and how to identify a country's resource potential.

It was not intended to be a trade forum for U.S. businesses, Goldwyn said.

In fact, U.S. companies have expressed little interest in foreign development because they are concentrating on the shale gas boom in the United States, he said.

New technologies and higher prices for natural gas in recent years have sparked renewed interest in developing shale gas in the United States.

Shale Gas Production Explodes

The Department of Energy's Energy Information Administration estimates that in the past decade, U.S. shale gas production has increased eightfold.

Shale gas now accounts for 10 percent of U.S. natural gas production and 20 percent of total remaining recoverable natural gas resources.

EIA estimates that by 2030, shale gas will represent 7 percent of total global natural gas supplies. Goldwyn noted that while large shale gas formations have been located worldwide, experts do not know how much there really is.

Goldwyn said conferees spent considerable time discussing water issues, including environmental

impacts on groundwater from the hydraulic fracturing process, and the large volumes of water needed in the drilling process.

The American Gas Association and the International Gas Union plan an international shale gas conference Nov. 3 in the Dallas-Fort Worth area that will include state and federal regulators as speakers.

A transcript of the State Department briefing on global shale gas development is available at <http://www.state.gov/s/ciea/rmk/146249.htm>.

Contact us at <http://www.bna.com/contact/index.html> or call 1-800-372-1033

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August 24, 2010

Little said about health effects of drilling

By Amy Freeth Antoinette Kuzminski

Although opponents of the "hydrofracking" method of drilling for natural gas have raised many concerns about potential for contamination of water and air, little has been written about what this would mean for human health.

Although it is to be hoped that "fracking fluid" would never enter ground water, there are already many examples of communities where this has happened.

What is in "fracking fluid," and why should we be afraid of it? This is not fully known, as the manufacturers have a "proprietary" right to non-disclosure. However, researchers have been able to recognize many of the chemicals used by analysis of spills and from the logs of hazardous materials required for interstate transport. (This information is available at www.endocrinedisruption.com/)

In the limited reports of the fracking fluid used in Pennsylvania, analysts have found at least 63 different compounds: Of these, about three-quarters have one or more toxic effects.

The residents of Dimock, Pa., whose wells have been contaminated, have complained of gastrointestinal, respiratory and neurological symptoms. These organ systems serve as an early-

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Coinciding with our websites redesign, we launched our new story comments feature through Disqus.

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warning system, or "canary in the mine" for many toxins.

Many of chemicals listed are known neurotoxins. A neurotoxin poisons the activity of the brain and nervous system. Symptoms may vary widely from headache to confusion to numbness, tingling or pain in the extremities. These symptoms are non-specific and it is difficult for physician's to recognize a cause in many cases. These types of toxicity are likely to result in permanent and debilitating damage.

Most of the chemicals listed are irritants upon direct contact. Depending upon the intensity of exposure, that irritation to skin would range from a severe burn to a minor rash. In the eye and airway and gastrointestinal tract a similar spectrum of complaints could be noted. Most of these complaints (from an irritant) would likely be reversible if the exposure ceased, although some would not be. Some of the agents are "sensitizers". A sensitizer makes a person more susceptible to an allergic stimulus and could lead to chronic and irreversible conditions.

Roughly a third of the chemicals are known to cause cancer, affect reproductive health, cause birth defects, or are endocrine/hormone disruptors. These toxicities commonly have a long interval between exposure and disease (a latency period), and to date there is no known level of safe exposure. Additionally, exposures may have different effects at different stages of life (including intrauterine development), and may, through genetic alteration, be passed down to future generations. Although marginally treatable, these health issues are almost always irreversible. It might be many years before the families and their future generations in Dimock begin to

7. Accusations of criminal activity.
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experience these problems.

The industrial processes around hydrofracking also release heavy metals and noxious gases such as volatile organic compounds, nitrogen oxides, and ozone. These are most likely to injure the respiratory and neurological systems, again presenting with a wide array of symptoms.

In tracking the cause of a health problem related to an environmental exposure, there is rarely a "smoking gun", such as the oil soaked dead pelicans washing ashore in the Gulf of Mexico. There are many reasons why it is difficult to identify a cause and effect relationship between an environmental exposure and a health problem. First, unless the exposure is massive or acute, many environmentally provoked health problems occur after long and highly variable intervals, obscuring the cause. This is true of most carcinogens and endocrine disruptors. Secondly, some individuals will have more problems than others, depending on their underlying health problems. Thirdly, complaints are often non-specific. This means that the symptoms may be very common even in healthy individuals, for example headaches. In the case of chronic very low dose exposures, the cumulative damage over long periods may be entirely different from the symptom complex seen with an acute or massive exposure. In fact, the great majority of industrial and environmental toxins have never been tested for chronic, low dose exposures, and traditional toxicology literature is almost entirely based on animal models, except where inadvertent human exposure has occurred.

Given the overall lack of information available for these agents, the potential for widespread and multi-faceted exposures and our inability to monitor and track health risks, it is safe to say that the medical community is not prepared to effectively detect or manage the short or long term effects of contamination from the chemicals used in and generated by the hydrofracking process. Since we cannot be certain that such contamination will not occur, we should oppose this technology. We cannot allow our addiction to fossil fuels to blind us to the unpleasant truths about the potential dangers of hydrofracking.

Amy FreethH, M.D., Specializes in diabetes, metabolism, endocrinology and internal

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Guest 30 minutes ago

Even though the authors are health professionals with advanced scientific training, I'm surprised by their lack of attention to any scientific method whatsoever in making wild, unsubstantiated claims in their column. Precious few chemicals contained in a fracturing fluid or product are "neurotoxins" or endocrine disruptors, but to the extent that any such substances are present they are fully disclosed as "hazardous chemicals" within the Material Safety Data Sheets that are available at the well site. And numerous public websites contain lists of these chemicals - but note that only a few chemicals are used to fracture an individual well. See for example the following site maintained by the Pennsylvania DEP:

<http://www.dep.state.pa.us/dep/deputate/minres/...>

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medicine. Antoinette Kuzminski, M.D., specializes in internal medicine. Both work with the Bassett Healthcare Network based in Cooperstown.

Tuesday, Aug. 24, 2010

ENERGY & ENVIRONMENT

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Why The EPA Has Texas Boiling

STATE OFFICIALS SAY THEY'RE BEING UNLAWFULLY PRESSED TO 'PLEDGE THEIR FEALTY' TO THE AGENCY

Tuesday, Aug. 24, 2010

by Christopher Snow Hopkins

The partisan issue of climate change is also becoming a contest between state and federal authority.

Texas is refusing to comply with what state officials regard as potentially unlawful actions on the part of the Environmental Protection Agency. In [a letter](#) dated Aug. 2, state officials accused the EPA of "[threatening] to usurp state enforcement authority and to federalize the permitting program of any state that fails to pledge their fealty." The letter is signed by Texas Attorney General **Greg Abbott** and state Commission on Environmental Quality Chairman **Bryan W. Shaw**.

The EPA has been dogged by lawsuits and petitions since it finalized its 2009 "[endangerment finding](#)," which holds that sources of greenhouse gases threaten the public health and welfare. That decision was limited to motor vehicles, but it established greenhouse gases as a pollutant under the purview of federal regulators, triggering further regulations.

At the heart of the newest controversy is the EPA's "[tailoring rule](#)," by which the agency has reinterpreted the Clean Air Act in order to exempt smaller polluters from greenhouse gas regulations that it plans to roll out. "They've substituted their judgment" for that of lawmakers, Shaw told NationalJournal.com. "They did Congress' job."

The Clean Air Act "explicitly sets the thresholds" that determine when a polluter becomes subject to regulation, he said. But "instead of choosing to say [that] it obviously doesn't make sense to apply [the Clean Air Act] to greenhouse gases, [the EPA] instead decided to rewrite what Congress intended, and so they pushed beyond what I think is legally allowed."

Both EPA Administrator **Lisa Jackson** and her opponents agree that the framers of the Clean Air Act, last amended in 1990, did not contemplate greenhouse gases. Applying the letter of the law to carbon emissions would require the EPA to regulate schools and hospitals in addition to power plants and oil refineries. But EPA's solution to this, the "tailoring rule," has exposed the agency to accusations of performing a legislative function and bullying state governments.

"They basically have said, 'never mind if there are certain processes in place,'" said Shaw. "There seems to be a policy at EPA at this time that they don't follow the protocols to get there, they just decide what they want to have happen and they mandate the states do that."

The EPA's "endangerment finding" prompted the attorneys general of Texas and Virginia, as well as the Ohio Coal Association and other industry groups, to file petitions challenging the scientific underpinnings of the link between climate change and human activity. In a 217-page document issued last month, Jackson dismissed their concerns, citing a "robust, voluminous and compelling" body of evidence that climate change is a serious threat.

EPA regional administrator **Al Armendariz** has framed Texas' refusal to comply as the latest chapter in the perennial battle between regulators and the industries they target. He said in a statement that the state's "unsubstantiated claims are the same sort that have been made -- and ultimately proven wrong -- every time EPA has, over the past 40 years, moved to implement the Clean Air Act's protections of public health and welfare."

Regardless of the prudence or legality of the "tailoring rule," the EPA's stalwart march toward regulation guarantees that energy legislation will remain a salient issue in the media and in Congress. Senate Majority Leader **Harry Reid**, D-Nev., has not indicated whether he intends to devote floor time after the August recess to an amendment introduced by Sen. **Jay Rockefeller**, D-W.Va., that would impose a two-year delay on federal regulation. And even though **President Obama** has said he will veto any bill designed to hamstring the EPA, measures to block the federal regulation of greenhouse gas emissions have currency on Capitol Hill, even among the most zealous proponents of a price on carbon. House Energy and Commerce Chairman **Henry Waxman**, D-Calif., has expressed a willingness to at least consider such an initiative.

Some political observers have questioned the EPA's aggressive posture on this issue, especially given Obama's stated preference for new legislation to address the problem of climate change. Despite its effect on lawmakers, the EPA has not indicated that its actions were ever intended to spur legislative action. Instead, Jackson has maintained that the Supreme Court's 2007 *Massachusetts v. EPA* decision compels the EPA to regulate greenhouse gases under the Clean Air Act absent "some reasonable explanation as to why it cannot or will not" do so.

The fight will surely intensify this fall in anticipation of the agency's first new rule, which will take effect on Jan. 2, requiring states to issue permits for new stationary sources, such as power plants or oil refineries, as well as existing stationary sources that have been modified in a way that significantly increases emissions.

It could be the opening salvo in a years-long battle. Applying a decades-old statute to pursue a contemporary aim has inflamed Texas officials, and Alabama, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Carolina, South Dakota, Mississippi and Louisiana are pursuing legal action of their own. And officials at Arizona's Department of Environmental Quality have no choice in the matter: Republican Gov. **Jan Brewer** signed a bill in April prohibiting state agencies from regulating greenhouse gases without legislative consent.

Nonetheless, a majority of states are expected to accommodate the EPA's regulatory regime, especially given that some have already embarked on carbon reduction initiatives of their own. The Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI), a coalition of 10 Northeastern and Mid-Atlantic states, has been auctioning carbon allowances to power plants on the Eastern seaboard since September 2008. And in June 2009, the EPA granted California a waiver, allowing the state to impose more stringent air pollution standards for motor vehicles.

Whether other states accept the EPA's rules may depend on the personality and views of their governors. "I don't believe that we'll see every state do this, but obviously, there are some states that are very concerned about this because the governors don't believe that global warming is a problem that must be addressed," said **Daniel J. Weiss**, director of climate strategy at the Center for American Progress.

"For example, I would be surprised if [Pennsylvania Gov. **Ed Rendell** (D)] raised this concern, but [Tom **Corbett** (R)], his possible successor, might. I doubt that [California nominee **Jerry Brown** (D)] would raise this concern, but [Meg **Whitman** (R)] might."

"In terms of the big picture, a lot of it depends on the outcome of the elections this fall."

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Cadre Material Products Receives Air Permit from Texas Commission on Environmental Quality

New Supply of Proppant Available in First Quarter of 2011

HOUSTON--([BUSINESS WIRE](#))--Cadre Material Products, LLC ("Cadre"), an operating company of Cadre Services, Inc., announced today that the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality ("TCEQ") has issued the final air permit for Cadre's proposed multi-million dollar sand mine and processing facility near Voca, Texas, enabling construction to begin immediately. Completion of the plant is expected in the first quarter of 2011. Under the direction of Matt Stafford, general manager, the sand mine and processing plant will be capable of producing over 800,000 tons annually of API-quality proppant used to enhance the production of oil and gas wells. Product will be available for shipment by truck at the plant or by rail at Cadre's trans-load facility in Brady, Texas.

"Advances in technology, coupled with the growth in oil and gas production in shale formations across the US, have significantly increased the demand for Brady sand. This fully automated, state-of-the-art plant located adjacent to the sand mine will enable Cadre to provide high quality products to our customers at competitive terms, while creating maximum profitability," said Maury Dumba, president and CEO.

USA Tank Storage Systems of Seneca, Missouri has been selected as the engineering procurement constructor ("EPC") for the project. Construction is expected to take five to seven months. When fully operational the plant will create nearly 100 new jobs in McCulloch County, Texas.

Frac-sand proppants are hard, spherical particles that are mixed with a fluid and pumped into wells at very high pressure. The proppants fracture hydrocarbon-bearing rock to create channels through which oil and natural gas reserves flow more easily. Proppants remain in place after the fracture job is completed, propping open the cracks and creating a highly permeable pathway for oil and gas flow.

About Cadre Material Products

Cadre Material Products, LLC, an operating company of Cadre Services, Inc. is a frac sand mining and processing company with principal operations near Brady, Texas. Cadre is owned by Denham Capital, a leading energy-focused global private equity firm headquartered in Boston, Massachusetts. For more information on Cadre, please visit www.cadrematerialproducts.com or call 281-531-2100.

Contacts

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Gulf waste heads to landfills, some with problems

By GARANCE BURKE and JASON DEAREN Associated Press Writers © 2010 The Associated Press

Aug. 25, 2010, 5:35AM

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NEW ORLEANS — The cleanup of history's worst peacetime oil spill is generating thousands of tons of oil-soaked debris that is ending up in local landfills, some of which were already dealing with environmental concerns.

The soft, absorbent boom that has played the biggest role in containing the spill alone would measure more than twice the length of California's coastline, or about 2,000 miles. More than 50,000 tons of boom and oily debris have made their way to landfills or incinerators, federal officials told The Associated Press, representing about 7 percent of the daily volume going to nine area landfills.

A month after the oil stopped flowing into the Gulf, the emphasis has shifted toward cleanup and disposal of oily trash at government-approved landfills in coastal states.

Environmental Protection Agency officials say the sites meet federal regulations, are equipped to handle the influx of waste and are being

monitored closely, although three sites have state environmental issues. State records show two are under investigation and one was cited in May for polluting nearby waters.

Some residents and experts question the wisdom of adding crude-covered refuse to dumps, since it could take years for potential problems to surface. They worry about the impact on groundwater if contaminants leach past liners enclosing the decaying garbage.

"Common sense would tell you you probably shouldn't keep dumping there if there are already problems," said Eric Schaeffer, a former head of the EPA's enforcement office who now heads a Washington-based legal advocacy group. "EPA needs to be able to say why despite the violations and discharges these are safe."

Weathered oil is less toxic than fresh oil, the EPA says, but can still contain some levels of benzene and other risky chemicals.

Both BP and the EPA are sampling the waste each week at the landfills, and the EPA and U.S. Coast Guard officials alike say so far it has not turned out to be hazardous. In some landfills, the spill waste is being mixed directly with regular household and industrial trash, which can contain chemicals, plastics and food.

It is too soon to tell if the potential hazards from the oily waste would be greater than any risks posed by what's already in the landfills, experts say. That will depend on the volume of the Gulf trash, the mass of industrial chemicals already there and how all those agents interact over time, said Conrad Volz, who directs the University of Pittsburgh's Department of Environmental and Occupational Health.

In the meantime, the alternative to using already troubled landfills is placing oily waste in other dumps without environmental issues — where oily waste's potential impacts could be tracked separately, experts say.

"The oily waste may not be the most toxic thing in those landfills," said Kurt Pennell, an environmental engineer at Tufts University who sits on a National Research Council committee studying groundwater problems near landfills and Superfund sites. "But obviously if ... the landfill isn't well controlled, that is problematic."

EPA Assistant Administrator Mathy Stanislaus, who oversees the agency's waste management plans, said the landfills can handle the oily waste properly.

"The landfills ... have the system in place, the kind of liner, the kind of monitoring systems to manage this so that there are not environmental impacts," Stanislaus said in an interview. "If there are any issues of concern, we will revisit."



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- Associated Press

- August 25, 2010

Oily boom, trash from Gulf spill heads to landfills, some with state environmental issues

NEW ORLEANS

The cleanup of history's worst peacetime oil spill is generating thousands of tons of oil-soaked debris that is ending up in local landfills, some of which were already dealing with environmental concerns...

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The Gulf trash's trip to the landfill begins in oiled marshes and beaches where tar balls washed up regularly. Recently, near the mouth of the Mississippi, workers standing in small boats collected 16,000 feet of oily absorbent boom in one day alone from waters surrounding one oil-covered marsh.

The boom is wrung out and dried before being shipped to landfills or incinerators.

Concerns about pollution prompted Harrison County, Miss., supervisors to decide against accepting more oily waste in their coastal county, which is recovering from Hurricane Katrina in 2005.

Waste is being trucked to the Chastang Landfill 25 miles north of Mobile, Ala., where state officials are investigating high levels of mercury and barium found in the dump's groundwater monitoring wells.

Nearby residents said they were worried that more chemicals were coming to the facility.

"We already got enough problems here, and now they're going to bring us the oil and everything that comes out of those Gulf beaches?" said Lawrence Andry, 70.

The landfill's owner, Waste Management, believes the water contamination is the result of naturally occurring metals in the soil, not the dump, and is performing tests, said spokesman Ken Haldin.

Gulf waste also is taken to the county-run Magnolia Landfill about 60 miles south in Summerdale, Ala., which is being investigated for groundwater tainted with arsenic, acetone and other pollutants. State officials fined the dump \$30,000 last month for failing to properly monitor methane flares used to burn off gas from the heap.

Ed Fox, who manages the facility, said people should not worry because the well water used to monitor pollution is tested twice a year.

The Colonial Landfill in Sorrento, La., which is receiving Gulf waste, was cited in May for exceeding its permitted spills into a stream feeding the Lake Pontchartrain basin 11 times last year. State officials said the dump fixed the problem last month, but got another state citation for failing to show inspectors log books and install proper barriers around its monitoring wells — problems the operator says were addressed. Louisiana environmental authorities said Friday they are still in violation.

When informed that three landfills had issues, Stanislaus said EPA officials had visited the facilities and knew of the deficiencies, but that didn't disqualify them from accepting spill waste.

"We take these issues very seriously," he said. "If we find any major violations at any landfill that would impact the health of communities, and the state doesn't step in and act swiftly ... the on-scene coordinator and EPA will step in and stop any waste shipment."

BP's three waste hauling contractors say they're following strict procedures to ensure safe disposal, as do operators of the receiving dumps. Houston-based Waste Management Inc. has a contract to dispose of waste from Mississippi, Alabama and part of the Florida Panhandle. The rest of Florida is handled by Phoenix-based trash hauler Republic Services Inc., and Heritage Environmental Services has the BP contract for Louisiana.

Burke reported from Fresno, Calif.

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August 24, 2010

Adviser Says He Raised Concerns to BP on Well

By **ROBBIE BROWN**

HOUSTON — An official for Halliburton, the company hired by BP to perform a critical step in the process for closing the well connected to the Deepwater Horizon [oil](#) rig, testified Tuesday that days before the rig exploded he had raised concerns to BP about its plan for executing the procedure, but that he continued with the job anyway.

The official, Jesse M. Gagliano, a shore-based technical adviser, told federal investigators here that he had recommended that BP use a greater number of devices called “centralizers” in the well for the tricky step known as cementing, which is a method of strengthening the well to control pressure from the oil and gas. He said he was ignored.

Centralizers help cement flow evenly around an oil well before hardening, and using 6 of them — instead of the 21 that he recommended — made the well more likely to need additional cementing, Mr. Gagliano said.

Investigators say they believe that the cement poured by Halliburton may have failed under tremendous pressure on April 20, producing the oil rig explosion that led to the largest deep-water oil spill in United States history.

Mr. Gagliano and a lawyer for BP disputed whether Halliburton or BP should be responsible for the final cement plan.

“This reflects your best engineering judgment and analysis, doesn’t it?” asked Rick Godfrey, a BP lawyer, referring to a report prepared by Mr. Gagliano two days before the disaster that permitted the six centralizers.

“No, my best engineering analysis would have been to run 21 centralizers,” Mr. Gagliano said.

The testimony, before an eight-member panel of federal government investigators, provided a fuller portrait of workers’ potentially risky decisions in the days before the disaster: not conducting a test called a “cement bond log,” not using a potentially safer type of well liner, and not conducting a “bottoms-up” test of the drilling solution in the well.

In a report to BP two days before the disaster, Mr. Gagliano noted that a reduced number of centralizers could cause a “severe gas flow” problem. By the morning of the disaster, BP had more centralizers flown to the rig, but decided not to install them, Mr. Gagliano said.

But internal Halliburton documents suggest that company employees believed that the cement job had been conducted properly by the day of the disaster.

“We have completed the job and it went well,” one Halliburton worker, Nathaniel Chaisson, wrote in an e-mail to colleagues on the morning of the disaster. “Full returns were observed throughout.”

Another internal Halliburton report from that day said, “Cement job pumped as planned.”

Reports by Halliburton experts on the company’s Web site suggest that the company is prepared to control such “severe gas flow” problems as Mr. Gagliano forecast. In 2008, a cementing expert, Ron Crook, recommended that such problems be contained by changing the ingredients and consistency of the cement and its placement in the well.

“In wells with severe levels of gas migration,” the article states, the risk of a gas flow problem “can be reduced to a safe level” by adjusting those other factors.

A reduced number of centralizers have been used on other wells in the Gulf of Mexico, Mr. Gagliano said. But he said the plan for the Deepwater Horizon made him uncomfortable.

“Hey, I think we have a problem here,” Mr. Gagliano said he told shore-based BP officials when he learned that six centralizers were being proposed.

But BP overrode his objections, he said. “BP had made their decision,” he said.

Earlier in the hearings, an employee for Transocean, the rig’s owner, testified that his company

provided financial bonuses to workers based in part on how quickly they made equipment repairs. The testimony from Daun Winslow, a performance division manager on the rig at the time of the disaster, furthered concerns that financial pressure might have trumped safety on the rig.

The amount of “downtime” for a rig was a small factor in calculating bonuses, Mr. Winslow testified, although other factors, including the rig’s environmental impact, customer satisfaction, individual performance and safety were also considered.

“Safety was a bigger component than downtime,” Mr. Winslow said. “Safety is one of our core values.”

Under questioning from BP’s lawyers, Mr. Winslow said Transocean lost as much as \$500,000 a day in rig rental fees paid by BP when mechanical repairs prevented drilling for oil.

Mr. Winslow also faced questions about an emergency on another Transocean rig in the North Sea that bore similarities to the Deepwater Horizon disaster. He testified that he had never heard of the near-disaster in the North Sea in December, even though Transocean internal documents suggest that the company intended to make critical changes to its oil well safety procedures.

Like the disaster in the gulf, the North Sea emergency involved dangerous pressure levels in the well, a failure to detect those pressures in time, a risky plan for sealing the well and an emergency order for the crew to evacuate to lifeboats. Mr. Winslow said Tuesday that knowledge of the episode would have been helpful, although he noted differences to the disaster in the gulf.

“I believe this would increase the awareness of anyone in the drilling industry,” he said.

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August 24, 2010

Job Losses Over Drilling Ban Fail to Materialize

By **JOHN M. BRODER** and **CLIFFORD KRAUSS**

WASHINGTON — When the Obama administration called a halt to virtually all deepwater drilling activity in the Gulf of Mexico after the Deepwater Horizon blowout and fire in April, [oil](#) executives, economists and local officials complained that the six-month moratorium would cost thousands of jobs and billions of dollars in lost revenue.

Oil supply firms went to court to have the [moratorium](#) overturned, calling it illegal and warning that it would exacerbate the nation's economic woes, lead to oil shortages and cause an exodus of drilling rigs from the gulf to other fields around the world. [Two federal courts](#) agreed.

Yet the worst of those forecasts has failed to materialize, as companies wait to see how long the moratorium will last before making critical decisions on spending cuts and layoffs.

Unemployment claims related to the oil industry along the Gulf Coast have been in the hundreds, not the thousands, and while oil production from the gulf is down because of the drilling halt, supplies from the region are expected to rebound in future years. Only 2 of the 33 deepwater rigs operating in the gulf before the [BP](#) rig exploded have left for other fields.

?

While it is too early to gauge the long-term environmental or economic effects of the release of 4.9 million barrels of oil into the gulf, it now appears that the direst predictions about the moratorium will not be borne out. Even the government's estimate of the impact of the drilling pause — 23,000 lost jobs and \$10.2 billion in economic damage — is proving to be too pessimistic.

There are several reasons the suspension has not cut as deeply as anticipated.

Oil companies used the enforced suspension to service and upgrade their drilling equipment, keeping shipyards and service companies busy. Drilling firms have kept most of their workers, knowing that if they let them go it will be hard to field experienced teams when the moratorium is lifted. Oil companies have shifted operations to onshore wells, saving industry jobs.

And the administration has dropped repeated hints that the [offshore drilling](#) ban will be eased or removed before it is set to expire on Nov. 30.

[Michael R. Bromwich](#), the director of the [Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, Regulation and Enforcement](#), the agency responsible for policing offshore drilling, said Monday in a letter to the presidential commission investigating the accident that it was possible that the moratorium would be lifted before Nov. 30 for certain types of rigs.

Mr. Bromwich's boss, Interior Secretary [Ken Salazar](#), said the agency was "ahead of schedule" in drawing up new rules to allow drilling to resume and suggested that the moratorium could be eased as early as next month.

Oil workers idled by the government-imposed drilling suspension are not eligible for BP money intended for people directly affected by the spill, like gulf shrimpers and charter-boat captains. But BP has set aside \$100 million to compensate rig hands and support workers who lose their jobs because of the moratorium. The Rig Workers Assistance Fund has not started to make payments.

Oil companies continue to lobby for a lifting of the ban and warn that if it goes on much longer they will move their operations elsewhere. Yet they are hedging their bets by keeping crews and equipment on standby, expecting the pause to end well before the end of the year.

"It's like a taxi that stops but the meter keeps going," Ola Morten Aanestad, a vice president for [Statoil](#), the Norwegian company that is a major producer in the gulf, said of its stranded rigs. Statoil has invested in a half-dozen drilling projects that are now frozen by the moratorium, including two in which it is the main operator.

"We are looking at what other alternatives there are elsewhere, but I can't predict what will come about," Mr. Aanestad said.

But he added that Statoil had not laid off any gulf workers. "Our base assumption is we will be

able to resume our activities and work with our deepwater leases,” he said.

The Noble Corporation, a major offshore driller, had six rigs operating in the gulf before the BP accident and has since acquired a seventh. All are now in limbo, said John Breed, a company spokesman, who added that the company was “looking at opportunities outside the United States.”

But Mr. Breed said the company had not let any rig workers go so far.

“Our goal has been to try to maintain the continuity of our work force, but how long that will go on we don’t know,” he said.

Mr. Breed said a long moratorium would hurt not only the drillers but also the service companies that do the seismic work, the caterers who feed the thousands of rig workers and the sellers of uniforms and safety boots.

The moratorium is likely to have a modest immediate effect on domestic oil production. The Energy Department projects that the moratorium will bring a decline of 120,000 barrels a day in deepwater production in 2011, but domestic daily crude oil production is still expected to increase by 30,000 barrels a day, to 5.46 million barrels.

Eleven deepwater gulf projects operated by major companies like Shell, **Chevron** and BP that were supposed to begin operating over the next year have been delayed, meaning that 400,000 fewer barrels of oil will be produced in 2015 than originally anticipated, said Leta K. Smith, director of exploration and production trends at **IHS-CERA**, an energy consulting firm.

But while that would represent about 7 percent of current domestic production, the probable delay in production would be at most six months to a year. “The total reserves that will eventually be produced will be the same,” Ms. Smith said.

Deepwater oil drilling has played an increasingly important role in world energy markets in recent years, and that has not changed after several accidents in the waters of Australia, Britain, Mexico and the United States.

Since 2006, nearly half the total oil and gas reserves added worldwide have been in deepwater areas. Six million barrels of oil a day, or 7 percent of total global production, are now produced

in deepwater areas. Global deepwater oil production is expected to double by 2030.

With the world becoming increasingly dependent on deepwater oil supplies, the BP spill has so far had a very limited effect on drilling around the world. Britain has stepped up inspections of offshore rigs. Brazil has announced a safety review that will take a year to complete before it makes any regulatory changes related to its fast-growing offshore drilling industry. Angola has increased inspections.

But there are few signs of any slowdown in drilling. In Norway, which already has strong regulations, the BP accident at first shook the industry. An auction of about 100 offshore lots was initially postponed, but in the end, only six lots in environmentally sensitive areas were kept off limits. In Nigeria and Ghana, some government officials have expressed caution about deepwater drilling, but there have been no significant delays.

“Other countries are not overreacting,” said Robert Johnston, director of energy and natural resources at [Eurasia Group](#), a consulting firm. “The BP crisis has created new concerns about safety and the environment, but at the same time countries like Norway with declining oil production, or countries like Trinidad with declining gas production have a strong incentive to go forward in deep water.”

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August 24, 2010

A Gulf Science Blackout

By LINDA HOOPER-BUI

Baton Rouge, La.

THE Deepwater Horizon blowout may be capped and the surface oil slick dispersed, but the scientists' job has just begun: hundreds of us are working in and around the gulf to determine the long-term environmental impact of the drilling disaster.

Although we are all doing needed research, we're not receiving equal money or access to the affected sites. Those working for BP or the federal government's Natural Resource Damage Assessment program are being given the bulk of the resources, while independent researchers are shoved aside.

The problem is that researchers for BP and the government are being kept quiet, and their data is unavailable to the rest of the community. When damages to the gulf are assessed in court or Congress, there might not be enough objective data to make a fair judgment.

Transparency is vital to successful science: researchers must subject their proposals to the scrutiny of colleagues, and publications require peer review. When it comes to field research, scientists need equal access to the same sites to test competing hypotheses.

But BP, which controls access to the Deepwater Horizon site and vast stretches of the water around it, seems unconcerned about those principles. Some suspect that the oil company is focusing its research on gathering material to support its legal case; we can't know for sure, though, because researchers who get money from BP must sign strict three-year confidentiality agreements. In any case, whatever research comes out of BP's efforts will be tainted by secrecy.

The damage-assessment process isn't much more accessible. It has amassed enormous

amounts of data but offered only vague promises to make it public, and it likewise requires confidentiality agreements from the researchers it finances. This research will probably be used against BP in court; chances are, then, that it will not be subject to outside scrutiny out of fear that a weakness in the government's case could be exposed.

Independent researchers like me and my team — we study the effect of things like oil and dispersants on insects — have had to rely on the meager discretionary funds provided by our university departments, particularly in the early weeks of the disaster. And, as the weeks have rolled into months, we have found ourselves blocked from a widening list of sites, all of which are integral to completing our investigations.

True, the National Science Foundation has a rapid-response grant program that has been a lifeline to independent researchers, dispersing more than \$14 million to 90 short-term research projects associated with the disaster. My team submitted a proposal that was quickly peer-reviewed and approved, allowing us to continue our research. But given the unprecedented nature of the disaster, that's not nearly enough money.

Instead, we need a unified national research plan administered by the National Science Foundation. It would place a priority on coordinated, independent research, with a finance stream unconnected to BP or the damage-assessment process. Proposals would be peer-reviewed and methods vetted, and all results would be available for public scrutiny.

Moreover, the federal government should require that all credentialed scientists have access to the affected sites. Without such a commitment to independent financing and equal access, the legal process and the rehabilitation of the gulf will be seriously undermined.

Linda Hooper-Bui is a professor of entomology at Louisiana State University.

Thousands of dead fish reported at mouth of Mississippi

(AFP) – 19 hours ago

NEW ORLEANS, Louisiana — Thousands of fish have turned up dead at the mouth of Mississippi River, prompting authorities to check whether oil was the cause of mass death, local media reports said Monday.

The fish were found Sunday floating on the surface of the water and collected in booms that had been deployed to contain oil that leaked from the BP spill in the Gulf of Mexico, the Times-Picayune reported.

"By our estimates there were thousands, and I'm talking about 5,000 to 15,000 dead fish," St Bernard Parish President Craig Taffaro was quoted as saying in a statement.

He said crabs, sting rays, eel, drum, speckled trout and red fish were among the species that turned up dead.

Taffaro said there was some recoverable oil in the area, and officials from the state's wildlife and fisheries division were sampling the water.

But he added, "We don't want to jump to any conclusions because we've had some oxygen issues by the Bayou La Loutre Dam from time to time."

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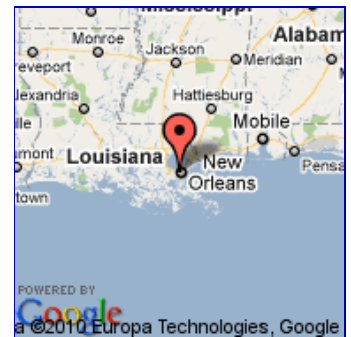
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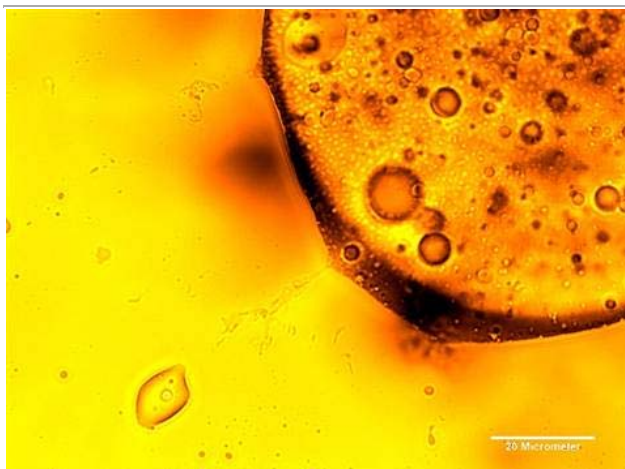


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New microbe discovered eating Gulf oil spill

'Great potential' for dispersing oil in deep sea, researchers report



Hsi-Ying Holman group
This microscopic image shows how oil is degraded by microbes that break it up into even smaller globules.

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A newly discovered type of oil-eating microbe suddenly is flourishing in the Gulf of Mexico and gobbling up the BP spill at a much faster rate than expected, scientists reported Tuesday.

Scientists discovered the new microbe while studying the underwater dispersion of millions of gallons of oil spilled since the explosion of

BP's Deepwater Horizon drilling rig.

Also, the microbe works without significantly depleting oxygen in the water, researchers reported in the online journal Scienceexpress.

"Our findings ... suggest that a great potential for intrinsic bioremediation of oil plumes exists in the deep-sea," lead researcher Terry Hazen, a microbial ecologist at Lawrence Berkeley National Lab in Berkeley, California, said in a statement.

The data is also the first ever on microbial activity from a deep-water dispersed oil plume, Hazen said.

Environmentalists have raised fears about the giant oil spill and the underwater plume of

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dispersed oil, particularly its potential effects on sea life. A report just last week described a 22-mile-long underwater mist of tiny oil droplets.

"Our findings show that the influx of oil profoundly altered the microbial community by significantly stimulating deep-sea" cold temperature bacteria that are closely related to known petroleum-degrading microbes, Hazen reported.

Their findings are based on more than 200 samples collected from 17 deep-water sites between May 25 and June 2. They found that the dominant microbe in the oil plume is a new species, closely related to members of Oceanospirillales.

This microbe thrives in cold water, with temperatures in the deep recorded at 41 degrees Fahrenheit.

Hazen suggested that the bacteria may have adapted over time due to periodic leaks and natural seeps of oil in the Gulf.

Scientists also had been concerned that oil-eating activity by microbes would consume large amounts of oxygen in the water and create a "dead zone" dangerous to other life. The new study found that oxygen saturation outside the oil plume was 67 percent while within the plume it was 59 percent.

"The low concentrations of iron in seawater may have prevented oxygen concentrations dropping more precipitously from

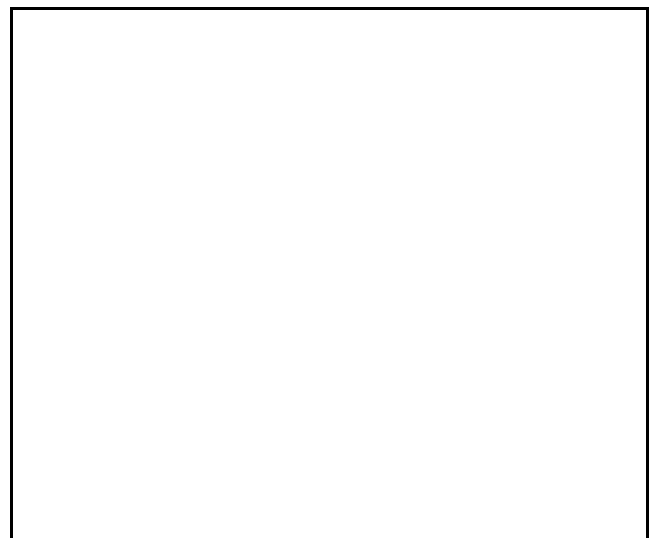
biodegradation demand on the petroleum, since many hydrocarbon-degrading enzymes have iron as a component," Hazen said. "There's not enough iron to form more of these enzymes, which would degrade the carbon faster but also consume more oxygen."

The research was supported by an existing grant with the Energy Biosciences Institute, a partnership led by the U.C. Berkeley and the University of Illinois that is funded by a \$500 million, 10-year grant from BP. Other support came from the U.S. Department of Energy and the University of Oklahoma Research Foundation.

Sciencexpress is the online edition of the journal Science.

The Associated Press contributed to this report.

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First catch from the Gulf: Is the seafood safe?

By Rick Jervis, USA TODAY

BLACK BAY, La. — David Morales set out in the pre-dawn blackness, when the marshes are quiet and the shrimp are busiest.

It was the first day of white shrimp season in Louisiana and Morales' first day back shrimping in the four months since the Gulf oil spill crisis began. He motored the Princess Taylor, a flat, 35-foot shrimping boat he built from scratch, through the dark marshes of Terre aux Boeufs, across Grassy Lake and into this broad salt bay.

There were things he knew — white shrimp are best caught at night and in the deeper channels of the bayou — and things he didn't, such as whether his nets would pull up ribbons of oil.

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Even if the shrimp are oil-free, Morales, a third-generation shrimper from St. Bernard Parish, was anxious about his ability to find anyone willing to buy his Gulf catch, he said.

"Right now, they're testing and they say it's good," Morales said. "But I think we're in for a long, hard road."

The opening of white shrimp season last week marked a major milestone in the oil spill crisis that began April 20, when the Deepwater Horizon rig exploded and later sank, killing 11 crewmembers and unleashing the largest offshore oil spill in U.S. history. Many of Louisiana's fishing grounds were shut down as a precautionary measure, as more than 100 million gallons of crude escaped into the Gulf, battering marshes and washing up on beaches.

But even as fishermen such as Morales returned to fishing the bayous and lakes once shut down by oil, questions linger on just how safe Gulf seafood is and how stringent the testing procedure used to check it.

FULL COVERAGE: [The latest on the oil spill](#)

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To what degree the oil — and the 1.8 million gallons of chemical dispersants used to break it up — will have a negative impact on Gulf seafood is under intense scrutiny. The answer could potentially leave a lasting scar on local economies and the livelihoods of fishermen such as Morales.

In an unusual joint effort, inspectors with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), the Food and Drug Administration and the Environmental Protection Agency, along with state wildlife officials, have poked, sliced and sniffed hundreds of samples of Gulf fish and shrimp during the past months, looking for harmful traces of oil or dispersant. So far, only one sample out of 1,007 has shown any risky residue, according to NOAA figures.

The amount of testing and cooperation between federal and state agencies is unprecedented and a strong sign that Gulf seafood so far has not been marred by the oil, said Ralph Portier, an environmental sciences professor at Louisiana State University who has tracked the spill's impact on seafood.

"This is probably the safest seafood entering the U.S. market right now," he said.

'It feels good to be shrimping'

Morales' first drag of the day was right at daybreak. The nets brought up a shivering, silvery jumble of tiny sardines, young brim, catfish, blue crabs, ribbonfish and shrimp — no oil. He separated the shrimp from the fish and crabs and shoveled them over ice in large coolers. It was a light catch, Morales said, only 20 pounds, but it was early yet.

"It feels good to be shrimping again," he said. "I grew up doing this. I don't want to see it end."

Morales, 47, was 13 when he first captained a shrimper, using skills taught by his father who learned from his father, all descendants of 18th-century settlers from the Canary Islands, known as *isleños*. As soon as he graduated from St. Bernard High School, he turned to fishing full time.

Hurricane Katrina pushed 6 feet of water into his home on Delacroix Island. He rebuilt on higher ground further up the highway and returned to shrimping two months after the storm, he said. Shrimp prices were on the rise. He bought a \$30,000 engine with last season's profits.

Then the oil came. Unable to fish, he began working for BP, ferrying boom and anchors through the waterways of nearby Plaquemines Parish and watching the oil slowly march into the marshes.

Smaller spills have leaked into the bayous before and the seafood always survived, Morales said. What worries him are the long-term effects of underwater oil and dispersants on shrimp larvae.

Last week, researchers at the [Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute](#) in [Massachusetts](#) announced that a 21-mile plume of underwater oil was radiating from the capped well, posing further peril to Gulf seafood. Officials at BP, the oil company responsible for spill cleanup, recently agreed to fund a three-year, \$13 million plan to study the oil's impact on seafood.

"We have yet to see the full picture of hazards posed by this spill," Rep. [Edward Markey](#), a Massachusetts [Democrat](#), said Thursday at a House committee hearing about the safety of seafood from the oil spill waters. "The work done by FDA, NOAA and EPA will be critical in ensuring that fish and shellfish from the Gulf is safe to eat for years to come."

Sniff, taste and chemical tests

The multiagency testing regimen involves the now-famous sniff test, as well as chemical testing.

A few weeks ago, state wildlife officials collected shrimp and finfish from the waters where Morales trawled and sent the samples to the National Seafood Inspection Laboratory in Pascagoula, Miss. A team of 14 "Expert Sensory Assessors" each day lower their specially trained noses into bowls of redfish, snapper and shrimp, straining to register a whiff of sweet crude oil.

They also taste the seafood and sniff for Corexit, the chemical used to break up the oil, said [Steven Wilson](#), a NOAA supervisor at the lab. The chemical laboratories do not test for Corexit, however, leaving only the sniffers to detect the dispersant, he said.

The inspectors work eight-hour shifts, five days a week, Wilson said. The hours are strict to prevent "sensory fatigue," he said. If an inspector works too long, "your nose gets tired and you don't smell as much," he said.

If the nose inspectors detect any oil or dispersant, the sample is immediately thrown out and that section of the Gulf remains closed, Wilson said.

If the sample smells clean, then it goes to regional laboratories for more detailed chemical testing, Wilson said. If it passes, the fishery is reopened. Of the 1,007 samples tested so far, only one has failed — a red snapper pulled from an area south of Orange Beach, Ala., in May, said Christine Patrick, an NOAA spokeswoman.

An additional 500 samples tested by state officials have showed no harmful levels contamination. About 70% of state waters have reopened since the testing began.

After the sniff and taste tests in Pascagoula, seafood samples from federal waters are frozen in 8-ounce glass jars, packed in dry ice and sent overnight to a NOAA lab in Seattle near Portage Bay.

There, a \$90,000 machine performs chemical tests for oil. The sensitive tests can detect up to one part per billion in the seafood, said Gina Ylitalo, the supervising research chemist in charge of the operation.

First, the seafood is ground up into fish mush using a kitchen hand blender. Next, the samples are dried, and the chemicals are extracted and cleaned up before being put in the desk-size testing machines for a 28-hour test run.

Of the 1,300 samples tested since a week after the spill began, not one has come back with levels above the FDA limits for any of the 13 petroleum signatures being tested. "The levels are very low, not even close," Ylitalo said.

The fish have been taken from fishing and shrimping areas deemed safe to reopen, Ylitalo said.

Fish and shrimp metabolize hydrocarbons quickly, within days, so even if they had been exposed to oil at some point in their lifespan, when caught in clean water they would have had time to filter it from their bodies, she said.

"I would eat these fish and these shrimp in a heartbeat," Ylitalo said.

Testing will continue for months to confirm that no tainted product is being caught. The lab is also working with the FDA to create a test for the dispersants used to break up the spill, which it hopes to have ready in a few weeks.

'Research is demanded'

Critics of the testing regimen say more vigorous testing of Corexit should occur before fisheries reopen. Independent review of the testing procedures should also take place, said Aaron Viles of the Gulf Restoration Network, a New Orleans-based environmental group.

"Independent science and research is demanded in a situation like this," Viles said.

At the House committee hearing last week on the oil and seafood, Lisa Suatoni, a senior scientist with the [Natural Resources Defense Council](#), said the government has not released specifics of their testing techniques and echoed Viles' calls for more independent testing.

"Due to lack of public transparency, questions remain about the scientific basis by which states are making decisions on reopening fishing area," Suatoni said.

For Morales, the proof is in the dripping nets he pulls from the bayous and bays he trawls.

Opening day was not perfect. Morales' engine blew a valve, and he was forced to end his trip early when a storm crept in from the Gulf. He pulled in a total of 615 pounds of shrimp, barely enough to cover the cost of fuel and ice.

One good sign: no oil on the nets or shrimp, he said.

After mooring at his father's dock in Delacroix Island, Morales offloaded 30 pounds of the shrimp he caught and carefully slid them into a large aluminum pot bubbling with boiling water, potatoes, turkey sausage and garlic in his brother's backyard. It's a Morales family tradition: a shrimp boil at the end of the first day of shrimp season. Wives, children, fathers-in-law and the occasional neighbor all gather to eat the first day's catch.

"People are afraid to eat seafood right now, and I guess I can't blame them," Morales said. "Everybody's gotta make up their own mind. I guess time will tell."

He dumped a bucket of boiled shrimp on a picnic table, and the family sat down to eat.

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Aug 24, 12:38 PM EDT

Transocean official recalls 'confusion' about test

HOUSTON (AP) -- An official says a high-ranking employee indicated a pressure test problem had been resolved hours before BP's Gulf of Mexico well blew out.

Daun Winslow works for Transocean, which owns the rig that exploded April 20, killing 11 workers and setting off the Gulf spill.

Winslow tells a government panel Tuesday that there was confusion among workers in the drill shack, who were talking before the explosion about a negative pressure test, a procedure typically done before a well is plugged.



AP Photo/Melissa Phillip

Winslow says he left while the drill team and tool pushers were discussing the pressure test to avoid disturbing them at a time of critical decision making. He says the highest-ranking Transocean person on the rig later gave him a "thumbs up," indicating it had been resolved.



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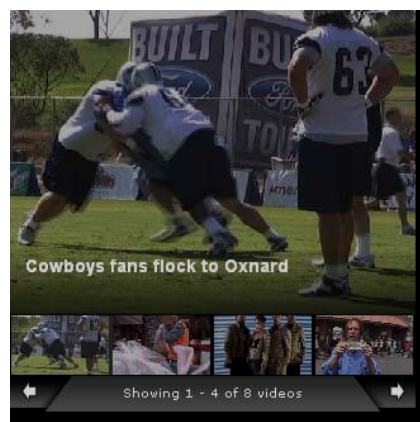
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Oil Spills

Coast Guard Plans Additional Hearings On Deepwater Horizon in New Orleans

HOUSTON—The joint U.S. Coast Guard-Bureau of Energy Management, Regulation, and Enforcement investigative panel expects to hold several more rounds of hearings in New Orleans before preparing a final report on the cause of the Deepwater Horizon rig accident in the Gulf of Mexico that killed 11 workers April 20, U.S. Coast Guard spokeswoman Sue Kerver said Aug. 23.

The final report is due to the Coast Guard and the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, Regulation, and Enforcement for approval in late January, Kerver told BNA.

Once approved, the final investigative report will be available to the public.

Three hearings have been held in New Orleans to investigate the circumstances surrounding the explosion, fire, pollution, and sinking of the Deepwater Horizon.

On Aug. 23, the fourth round of hearings shifted to Houston to enable local executives with BP Plc and Transocean to testify.

The weeklong Houston hearing also was scheduled so that investigators could subpoena local company officials to testify, if needed, Kerver said.

Later hearings in New Orleans may include evidence from the damaged blowout preventer that is expected to be salvaged from the well site and stored in a New Orleans area Coast Guard facility.

Panel Questioned Managers

During the first day of hearings in Houston, the panel questioned Neil Cramond, who oversees BP's marine operations in the Gulf of Mexico, and Paul Johnson, manager of the Deepwater Horizon for owner Transocean.

Cramond told the panel that he did not have knowledge that communication problems may have caused the blowout on the Deepwater Horizon.

Cramond said he could "not recollect" any accidents or injuries that occurred on the rig due to problems involving the division of authority on the rig between the offshore rig manager and captain of the drilling unit. He described the relationship or division of authority between the parties as the "industry standard."

Since the accident, BP has not made any marine operational changes to the rigs or given directives to Transocean on the relief wells it is drilling at the Macondo site, Cramond said.

Cramond told investigators that the rig captain is ultimately responsible for crew safety and environmental issues, but he is not always involved in decisions about how to deal with drilling operations and possible risks. He said a drilling manager has the authority to stop a job for safety reasons.

Cramond said the rig's general alarm system was functioning in an inspection and verification test conducted in March 2010.

He said he communicated concerns about certain safety problems on the rig several times to proper authorities in the drilling unit.

Cramond said he had "no information otherwise" that would have suggested the rig did not have a

sufficient number of crew members when the accident occurred.

Johnson, the shore-based manager for the rig who was responsible for training, personnel, and operational problems on the Deepwater Horizon, testified that workers on the rig were knowledgeable of the International Safety Management code and performed audits on the rig.

Johnson further testified that Lloyd's had conducted a random survey for Transocean of four company-owned rigs in the Gulf of Mexico, and "got a lot of good positive feedback" and saw some areas for improvement.

Johnson said health and safety policies and procedures on the rig "define what we do in emergencies."

Johnson testified that he questioned the experience of BP's well manager who was sent to the rig just several days before the explosion. That manager had been working on a BP production installation called Thunder Horse but was filling in for the well manager who had been away from the unit.

By Susanne Pagano

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Aug 24, 12:10 PM EDT

7 in intensive care after Ala. ammonia leak

THEODORE, Ala. (AP) -- Seven people are in intensive care a day after an ammonia leak at a coastal Alabama plant that freezes chickens.

About 130 people have sought treatment since ammonia spilled Monday at Millard Refrigerated Services in Theodore, creating a vapor cloud that also caused respiratory problems for people working nearby.

Officials say four people were in ICU at the University of South Alabama Medical Center on Tuesday, and three more were in intensive care at Infirmiry West.

Hospitals say people are still showing up with complaints. Many of those taken to hospitals were working with BP's oil spill response along the Theodore Industrial Canal.

Millard Refrigerated Services hasn't commented. A spokesman at company headquarters in Omaha, Neb., did not return phone messages.

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Video: Oil spill's effects still felt by Gulf wildlife (with photo gallery)

Published: Tuesday, August 24, 2010, 5:31 AM



Renee Busby, Press-Register



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(Press-Register/Mike Kittrell)

Bridget Olson with U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service holds an injured Laughing Gull caught on Gaillard Island Monday, August 23, 2010, in Mobile Bay south of Mobile, Ala. The injured bird will be taken to a wildlife rehabilitation center.

Large net in hand, Bridget Olson jumped out of the boat, then scooped up an injured bird slipping between the rocks on Gaillard Island in Mobile Bay.

While the laughing gull had traces of oil on its body, an injury prevented it from taking wing to get off the island, said Olson, a deputy project leader with the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service assigned to help with the recovery of oiled birds.

Still, officials said that while oil is no longer gushing into the Gulf of Mexico, wildlife along the Gulf Coast continues to feel the spill's effects.

"We've been finding birds every day in the bay," said U.S. Fish & Wildlife biologist Deirdre Whelan of Maine.

Bird recovery teams from the federal agency will continue to monitor the Gulf Coast for oiled birds for years to come, according to a spokeswoman for Fish & Wildlife.

"We see this as a long-term effort," said Nancy Brown.

Since the Deepwater Horizon drilling rig exploded in the Gulf on April 20, 629 visibly oiled birds have been recovered, according to Fish & Wildlife officials. Olson and Whelan have spent the past 10 days scouring the waters of Mobile Bay by boat, searching for more.

"Anything we find, alive or dead, we bring in," Whelan said, adding that the birds are examined to determine cause of death.

"We're seeing more birds dead of natural mortality than oil," said Olson, who is from Litchfield, Minn.

A two-hour boat trip in Mobile Bay and to Gaillard Island on Monday morning netted two birds. Both were captured, put in a crate and taken back to the Dog River Marina, where Disabled Animal Rescue Teams were waiting to transport the birds to the Oiled Wildlife Rehabilitation Center in Theodore.

Enlarge

Mike Kittrell

Bridget Olson with U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service searches Mobile Bay for injured or oiled wildlife Monday, August 23, 2010, near Mobile, Ala. (Press-Register, Mike Kittrell)

Oil Spill Wildlife 08-23-2010 gallery (16 photos)

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Wearing rubber gloves, Olson held the bird as Whelan wrote a report, noting the bird's condition and whether it had been oiled.

"It's alert," Whelan said, as the bird struggled to get free.

Olson said they are finding more birds now because they just recently started going into nesting areas that were off limits during nesting season.

At the outset of the trip, boat captain Darrell Roberts slowly motored the boat along the tide line, looking for birds. Olson used binoculars to look for white objects in the water. That usually means a laughing gull "belly up," dead in the water dead, she said.

As Roberts steered the boat back to the marina, Olson spotted something in the water. "Go to your hard right," she told Roberts.

"Everybody look for something white," she instructed the crew.

Roberts slowed the boat toward the object, which turned out to be a dead fish.

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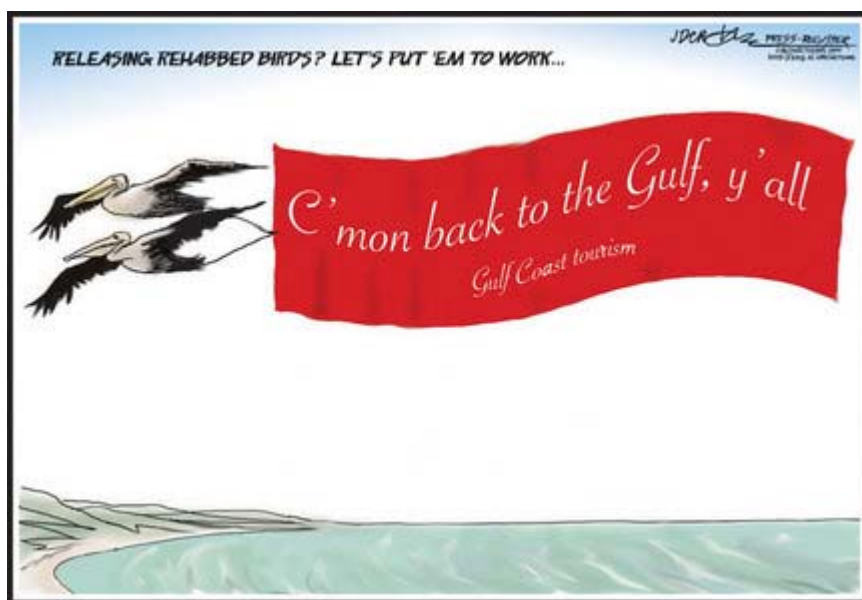


Fly, my pretties!

Published: Tuesday, August 24, 2010, 6:00 AM Updated: Tuesday, August 24, 2010, 9:08 AM



J.D. Crowe, Press-Register



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JD Crowe 8/24/10

The good news is, many of the oiled birds from the Gulf have been saved, cleaned, rehabilitated and are now being set free.

Why not put 'em to work?

What better messengers to potential tourists that the Gulf is open for business than those awesome pelicans.

Fly, my pretties. Bring them money-spendin' tourists back here where they belong.

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What To Do With Trash Left Behind In Gulf Cleanup?

August 23, 2010

text size **A A A**

The cleanup effort from the Gulf of Mexico oil spill has left behind more than 45,000 tons of garbage. That includes used boom, stained clothing from cleanup workers, tar balls and other trash. And now come questions of where to put that trash. Is it safe for the local landfill? Melissa Block talks to Darryl Malek-Wiley of the Sierra Club in New Orleans about taking out the trash from the Gulf.

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MELISSA BLOCK, host:

The BP oil spill has generated nearly 47,000 tons of oily solid waste so far - everything from tar balls to used boom to oiled vegetation. That waste has been sent to landfills along the Gulf Coast, and that has led to environmental and health worries among local communities.

Darryl Malek-Wiley is a field organizer with the Sierra Club working on environmental justice issues. He joins us from New Orleans. And, Darryl, why don't you explain first how this oily waste is processed?

Mr. DARRYL MALEK-WILEY (Field Organizer, Sierra Club): Well, the oily waste is picked up by ships or by gentlemen picking up tar balls, put into containers, taken to a sorting location and then shipped to different landfills along the Gulf Coast.

BLOCK: Okay. And would it be considered hazardous waste? Would that determine what kind of landfill it can be sent to?

Mr. MALEK-WILEY: That's one of the arguments that we're having with the Environmental Protection Agency. They're not considering it as a hazardous waste, so it can go to any landfill that has a liner in it, any municipal landfill.

BLOCK: And what would determine whether something is considered hazardous waste?

Mr. MALEK-WILEY: It's complicated. But what they're saying is their testing is not finding any hazardous characteristics. Also there is a loophole in the federal law dealing with oil exploration and production waste that, by law, makes it non-hazardous.

BLOCK: Because I would assume this is such a busy community under the best of times that a lot of oily waste would be generated all the time, and it would be sent somewhere.

Mr. MALEK-WILEY: Right. It's sent to landfills that aren't as strictly regulated as a hazardous waste landfill because of this exception for the waste, and there have been a number of incidents throughout history in Louisiana with real problems at oilfield waste disposal sites.

BLOCK: And what kind of problems are you most worried about?

Mr. MALEK-WILEY: Air emissions going into communities. Other places, they've injected it under the ground. In some cases, that has come back up in other location. So those are a couple of the environmental issues related to the oilfield waste.

BLOCK: What sorts of things would they be testing for when they test the oily waste?

Mr. MALEK-WILEY: They're testing for a series of different chemicals that are usually found in oil, and they're also looking at - some oils have heavy metals just because where they're coming out of the reservoir. So they're looking at a suite also of heavy-metal testing.

BLOCK: I did read this from one scientist that the oil that's being brought in is so degraded from being out in the Gulf for so long that a lot of the most worrisome chemicals would have evaporated. Do you think that's true?

Mr. MALEK-WILEY: Some of the benzenes and toluenes that are definitely known to cause cancer have been evaporating, but there hasn't been enough air testing to confirm that there haven't been any clouds of benzenes, toluenes impacting coastal communities.

BLOCK: I'm wondering, Mr. Malek-Wiley, the waste has to go somewhere, right, and there's a lot of it.

Mr. MALEK-WILEY: Right.

BLOCK: What would you have them do with it that they're not doing right now?

Mr. MALEK-WILEY: Well, we would like to see it, you know, in a special segment of landfills. If it's going to a municipal landfill, somehow that we can segregate it and possibly come back and look at it in future time. The other possibility is sending it to a hazardous waste landfill, which has higher standards as far as protecting the environment from anything getting out into the air, water or land.

BLOCK: Have you heard any specific complaints from people in the communities? Any health concerns that they have right now, things they've started to see?

Mr. MALEK-WILEY: I have not - that's one thing that I've been talking with a number of community leaders around the state in Louisiana and in Mississippi and Alabama trying to identify people who live right next to the sites, and we're working to hold a meeting of the directly impacted communities sometime in September.

NORRIS: So nothing so far?

Mr. MALEK-WILEY: Nothing so far, correct.

BLOCK: I've been talking with Darryl Malek-Wiley. He's a field organizer with the Sierra Club in New Orleans. Thanks very much.

Mr. MALEK-WILEY: Thank you very much, Melissa.

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October 15

August 23, 2010

Alabama: Ammonia Leak Sickens 120

By THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

More than 120 people were sickened Monday by the leak of ammonia at the Millard Refrigerated Services plant in Theodore. Hospital officials in Mobile said 29 people were admitted, including four in intensive care. Scores of people were forced to remain in their homes and at a school after the leak was reported. The leak also forced workers to evacuate one of BP's main staging areas for the Gulf of Mexico oil spill cleanup. BP said dozens of cleanup workers from its Theodore site were among those taken to hospitals.

Star-Telegram

Louisiana oysters back on the market - but what's in store next year?

Posted Monday, Aug. 23, 2010

BY BARRY SHLACHTER

barry@star-telegram.com

Louisiana oysters are back, along with shrimp, creating a collective sigh of relief for local restaurants that depend on Gulf seafood.

But supplies are still short and prices high, and production next year might be hurt by the very cleanup efforts meant to save oyster grounds during BP's 120-day Deepwater Horizon oil spill.

Flying Fish, a Dallas-based chain with six restaurants, including one on Fort Worth's near west side, stopped offering oysters on the half shell for nearly two months during the spill and resorted to buying shucked Pacific Northwest oysters for its fried platters and po' boys, said Ken Vaughn, 47, director of operations.

"We Have Oysters!," declares a banner over the entrance of its Montgomery Street restaurant. The chain was out of oysters on the half shell from late June until the second weekend of August, Vaughn said.

Roosevelt Pierre, 52, a New Orleans accountant-turned-restaurateur who runs Pierre's Mardi Gras Cafe on Arlington's South Cooper Street, said he bought a \$1,500 freezer and carted over a chest freezer from home, then filled them with fresh shrimp and oysters whenever they came onto the market.

Over at Boo-Ray's of New Orleans, a Cajun-style restaurant with locations in Weatherford and Fort Worth, owner Scotty Marks, 38 -- another New Orleans native -- said he had no oysters the second weekend of August. "This week I had plenty."

All reported higher prices from suppliers and often tinier oysters.

At Flying Fish, if a dozen oysters on the half shell are smaller than usual, the kitchen staff will throw in a couple extra, Vaughn said.

Mike Voisin, who operates Motivati Seafoods of Houma, La., said that as of Thursday only 40 to 50 percent of oyster areas were open.

Also affecting production was the number of harvesters signing up their boats and themselves with BP for cleanup duties. But those efforts are winding down, he said. Overall, oyster shipments were down about 75 percent in recent weeks.

All of the oysters being shipped have been inspected and are safe to eat, Voisin and state fisheries officials said. A number of areas had been closed as a precautionary measure, but only a few saw their seafood stocks tainted by the spill.

When harvesters return to three coastal parishes -- Plaquemines, St. Bernard and Jefferson -- they are going to find dead oysters in areas that once produced award-winning specimens, warned Albert "Rusty" Gaudé, a fisheries specialist with the Louisiana State University Agricultural Center.

Torrents of water were channeled through the oyster beds to remove crude oil. But warm freshwater can be lethal to the bivalve mollusks whose reproductive cycle at this time of year make them particularly vulnerable, Gaudé said.

Voisin called it "friendly fire" and predicted that the well-intentioned maneuver could mean a 50 percent decline in production over the next two years.

"We'll still be the No. 1 producer in the country, but we'll produce half," said Voisin, who testified before a congressional committee this week in the hope of securing federal aid for the damaged industry.

From September through May, Voisin said, there should actually be an increase in oysters on the market, meaning plenty for Thanksgiving and Christmas. Oysters from Texas, Mississippi, Alabama and Florida will supplement Louisiana production, he said.

"Alabama will have a good year," he predicted. "Usually, it's not even a blip on the radar."

Voisin expects a recovery for the three affected parishes by spring of 2012 if a good reproductive cycle for the oysters begins this fall.

The spill also has been hard on Louisiana's shrimp industry. "At one point, virtually all shrimp-producing areas were closed," said Mark Schexnayder, a marine biologist with the LSU AgCenter. "The water off Texas was open but not central, southern and eastern Louisiana areas. But the majority of in-shore areas opened on Monday."

When shrimpers return from BP's steady-paying "vessels of opportunity" cleanup program, will the market be there?

New Orleans seafood distributor Craig Borges this week told Kenneth R. Feinberg, appointed by the White House to handle a \$20 million

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oil spill compensation fund, that he lost a \$2 million a year shrimp account when the out-of-state customer switched to imports during the lengthy spill crisis, Schexnayder reported.

Another distributor, Gary Bauer, told of a customer requesting packaging for crab that didn't say "Louisiana" because of the BP spill stigma, Schexnayder added.

Many North Texans apparently had no such qualms.

"Believe it or not, when the oil spill first happened, oyster sales actually went up," said Boo-Ray's Marks. "They probably were thinking it's the last time they'd get oysters." Overall sales were up 8 to 10 percent in July at his Weatherford store, compared to the same month the year before, he said.

Shipments were very sporadic, he said. "We had to scrounge around. And prices went up -- about 15 percent -- and I ate that cost."

At Flying Fish, some of the higher costs were passed on. A dozen oysters on the half shell before the spill were \$8.50 but are now \$11.99.

"As soon as we get price relief on oysters, we hope to go back to our regular price level," Vaughn said. "That's our goal."

Even with the price increase, the chain took a 15 percent hit to its bottom line, which was attributed to higher Gulf seafood costs, he said.

Marks said jumbo shrimp rose about 40 percent in price, prompting him to speculate that national chains used their economic muscle to buy up supplies -- "leaving us little guys to fend for ourselves."

Pierre said he has been paying about 35 percent more for oysters but didn't change the numbers on his menu. "I held prices the way I had them so my customers had the luxury of not seeing a price increase."

As for himself, "I was kind of panicking because I sell a lot of platters and po' boys, and shrimp for gumbo," the Arlington restaurateur added.

"But oysters and shrimp are easier to get now, so I don't need to replace the frozen stockpile. I just order as I need now."

Barry Shlachter, 817-390-7718

[Looking for comments?](#)

Deep Water Dead Zone Predicted in the Gulf

An area of low oxygen deep in the Gulf of Mexico could persist for two years, research shows.

By [Jessica Marshall](#) | Mon Aug 23, 2010 11:20 AM ET

The oil gusher on the Gulf seabed may be stopped, but much of the [spilled oil still lurks in a plume](#) of oil and dissolved methane gas 3,200-4,300 feet below the surface.

New research predicts that this plume will likely create a low-oxygen "dead zone" inhospitable to life in these deep waters, as microbes consume the oil and gas entrained in the plume.

The cold temperatures in the plume will slow the growth of the microbes compared to microbes acting at the surface. Because of this slower growth, the team predicts that it will be sometime in the fall before the oxygen levels hit their minimum.

But weak currents at that depth mean that the low oxygen levels may persist for a long time, with little mixing to bring in oxygenated waters: the team estimates it will be a couple of years before the oxygen levels return to normal.

The findings, now in press at the journal *Geophysical Research Letters*, predict that the zone will be similar in size to the well-known seasonal dead zone at the mouth of the Mississippi River caused by nutrient runoff upriver, though the new zone will remain within about 100 kilometers (62 miles) of the spill site.

"The area of the seasonal dead zone on the shelf is much larger, but it's much thinner," said study author Robert Hallberg of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Geophysical Fluid Dynamics Laboratory in Princeton, NJ. "This one is a smaller area, but it's thick. It's still a small area compared to the Gulf of Mexico."

Many researchers have been speculating that the deepwater plume would create a dead zone as microbes ate the undersea oil and gas, consuming oxygen in the process. The new work combines the best estimates for how much oil was released with detailed models of ocean currents and information about typical microbial oil degradation rates to show that the conditions in the Gulf should, indeed, produce one.

Unlike the seasonal dead zone, which occurs in shallow waters, the oil-caused zone will be deep enough that fisheries shouldn't be affected. "I'm not expecting that this is going to have really dire consequences for people," Hallberg said. "There may be consequences for deep ecosystems."

"It's almost a separate ocean down there," agreed Monty Graham of the Dauphin Island Sea Lab in Alabama, who observed [oxygen depletion in shallower waters](#) following the spill. "That doesn't mean it's not important for diversity. We don't know the impact on the deep-diving marine mammals that might be going down searching for food."

While this study predicts oxygen depletion near the spill site, plume measurements made in June and published in *Science* [last week](#) showed very little oxygen consumption by microbial oil degradation.

"On the face of it, it might appear to be in contradiction to what we are saying," Hallberg said. "but

if you take into account the temperature, the oxygen depletion should be peaking in the fall. Those observations from June may have been taken too soon and too close to the source so that the oxygen drawdown may not have been realized yet."

Another possibility, Graham said, is that the oil degradation rate estimates that the team used in their simulations may not match those of the actual microbial community in the plume. "It could be a time lag difference that the community of microbes hasn't established itself and therefore it's not operating at its maximum efficiency."

The study also provided information about the spill's toxicity by estimating the concentrations of various oil components in the deepwater plume over time.

"We weren't finding widespread concentrations of the oil that would be acutely toxic at the level that kills organisms over a couple of days," Hallberg said.

"I am less worried about the hypoxia than I am about the potential chronic effects of these hydrocarbons on the organisms and larvae," said Nancy Kinner, head of the Center for Spills in Environment at the University of New Hampshire in Durham.

"What we really don't know is if you have a low dose -- a low concentration in the water for a long exposure -- what's the chronic impact going to be?"

Hallberg agreed. "We know that compounds like toluene and benzene are regulated as known human carcinogens. You could imagine that there could be something similar for marine organisms, or something that affects development, or something that doesn't actually kill them. That's something where I think there's going to be a lot of research in the coming year."

Newsweek

Selling Florida's Gulf Coast Beaches

As the oil spill retreats, the tourism industry tries to lure visitors back.

by [Tara A. Lewis \(/authors/tara-a-lewis.html\)](/authors/tara-a-lewis.html) August 22, 2010



Joe Raedle / Getty Images

Customers shop in a Pensacola beach store. Tourism has suffered in the Florida Panhandle this summer partially due to oil spill fears.

It's been a tough summer for tourism along Florida's Gulf Coast, which has been suffering since the start of the Deepwater Horizon oil spill in late April. Although surface oil did little damage to beaches in the Panhandle, pictures of oil-bathed birds and blackened sand fueled misconceptions and kept many visitors away. But President Obama's visit to Panama City Beach last weekend and some last-minute summer deals may help attract a new wave of vacationers to the Sunshine State.

The president's visit was part of a larger effort to put the area's beaches back on vacationers' lists. Obama and his younger daughter, Sasha, even took a well-publicized dip in the water. An official White House photo of the two wading near Panama City Beach was meant to encourage reluctant tourists: "I also want to point out that as a result of the cleanup effort, beaches all along the Gulf Coast are clean and safe and open for business," Obama [told reporters](http://www.reuters.com/article/idUSTRE65O5TA20100815) (<http://www.reuters.com/article/idUSTRE65O5TA20100815>) after speaking with local business owners.

Video: [The 10 most fascinating and frustrating videos of the Gulf Coast oil spill »](http://www.newsweek.com/video/2010/06/08/can-t-take-our-eyes-off-of-goo.html)
(<http://www.newsweek.com/video/2010/06/08/can-t-take-our-eyes-off-of-goo.html>)

BP, roundly condemned for the spill, is trying to do its part, giving \$7 million to seven Panhandle counties to "put heads in beds," says company spokesman John Curry. The money, divided among the counties based on size and relative bed taxes (paid by all transient guests in Florida), will fund—and in some cases already has funded—voucher programs, lodging-discount programs, and

beach concerts. Ed Schroeder, director of Visit Pensacola, says Escambia County, home to Pensacola's beaches, received \$1.3 million, of which \$700,000 will fund a gift-card program.

The promotion will offer American Express gift cards to visitors for each night they stay at a participating hotel, up to a maximum of \$300 worth of cards. The program begins this week and ends Sept. 30, says Schroeder. So far, Visit Pensacola has received 300 phone calls about the promotion and is expecting 7,000 to 10,000 new rooms to be booked. Pensacola beaches were barely affected by the spill, Schroeder says, but "the perception of the oil damage was enormous." No oil has been found on Escambia's beaches in more than a month, and even before that, little oil reached the region's shores, he says.



([http://www.newsweek.com/photo/2010/05/22/oil-spill-](http://www.newsweek.com/photo/2010/05/22/oil-spill-timeline.html)

[timeline.html](http://www.newsweek.com/photo/2010/05/22/oil-spill-timeline.html)) Joe Raedle / Getty Images

View a timeline of the gulf oil spill

[A Timeline of the BP Oil Spill in the Gulf of Mexico \(/photo/2010/05/22/oil-spill-timeline.html\)](http://www.newsweek.com/photo/2010/05/22/oil-spill-timeline.html)

Nevertheless, tourism in Escambia was down 15 percent in June and about 30 percent in July; it will likely drop by 30 percent in August as well. Those months make up the county's high season for tourism, accounting for about 53 percent of annual tourist activity. Schroeder says that although summer tourism normally winds down toward the end of August, October and November are becoming increasingly popular months for visitors. Even so, with the college-football season starting in early September, coastal businesses will face tough competition—on top of struggling through a slow summer.

Schroeder is optimistic, saying he expects tourists from all over the country to take advantage of the vouchers and gift-card deals, though most visitors will likely come from the surrounding 400 miles. To help draw crowds, the Escambia Tourist Development Council will use \$300,000 of the BP money to extend the De Luna Fest by a day. The music festival, set for Oct. 15–17, may draw [up to 50,000 people](http://www.pnj.com/article/20100813/NEWS01/8130336/DeLuna-Fest-gets-300K-in-BP-cash-free-day) (<http://www.pnj.com/article/20100813/NEWS01/8130336/DeLuna-Fest-gets-300K-in-BP-cash-free-day>), according to the organizers.

Many visitors are surprised by how clean the beaches are, says Julie Crowell, rental manager at JME Vacations on Navarre Beach in Santa Rosa County. Quite a few tourists have been taking photos and promising return visits as a way to support the area, she says. JME participated in a countywide discount program offering half-price condominium rentals to visitors who booked before Sept. 14. The promotion bumped its occupancy rate up to 80 percent—an improvement,

considering occupancy had fallen to 50 percent by the start of the summer, but still lower than the company's typical summer rate of 90 percent or higher.

Though tourists are gradually returning to Florida's beaches, the spill's long-term impact remains unclear. A significant amount of oil lingers, dispersed about 40 miles from the coastline beyond the shelf break in the deeper, colder water, says Richard Snyder, director of the Center for Environmental Diagnostics and Bioremediation at the University of West Florida. Snyder and other researchers at the university began testing water and sand in the region on May 3; they have found oil buried in the sand along the coast. Nonetheless, he says, the occasional tar ball on the beach is "more of an aesthetic problem than a health problem." Though the oil can be toxic and some of its compounds are known to cause cancer, people are probably exposed to more toxins changing their car oil than visiting any Panhandle beaches, Snyder says.

Despite declaring Panhandle beaches open for business, the president was adamant during his coastal foray about the need for a continued cleanup effort. "Oil is no longer flowing into the gulf, and it has not been flowing for a month. But I'm here to tell you that our job is not finished, and we are not going anywhere until it is," [he said \(http://www.reuters.com/article/idUSTRE65O5TA20100815\)](http://www.reuters.com/article/idUSTRE65O5TA20100815).

No one knows how quickly the dispersed oil and oil plumes will travel and how they will affect the reefs and ecosystem in the gulf. At least for now, though, it looks as if vacationers can still look to the Florida Panhandle as a destination. Snyder says the water is clean and that Florida's beaches continue to have some of the whitest sand in the world. The coming weeks will tell how persuasive the region will be in bringing back its tourists.



Daily Environment ReportTM

Source: Daily Environment Report: News Archive > 2010 > August > 08/25/2010 > News > Superfund: Responsible Parties to Pay \$6.3 Million For Radiation Cleanup at Gulf Nuclear Site

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Superfund

Responsible Parties to Pay \$6.3 Million For Radiation Cleanup at Gulf Nuclear Site

Halliburton Energy Services and other responsible parties have agreed to reimburse the U.S. government and the state of Texas a total of \$6.3 million for removal of radioactive material at three Texas sites collectively known as the Gulf Nuclear Site (*United States and State of Texas v. Halliburton Energy Services*, S.D. Texas, No. 4-07-cv-3795, *consent decree lodged 8/19/10*).

A notice scheduled for publication Aug. 25 in the *Federal Register* said EPA will be repaid nearly \$6 million and Texas will get \$325,000 under terms of a proposed consent decree lodged Aug. 19 in the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Texas.

The Justice Department's announcement said the proposed consent decree would resolve claims under the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act, also known as the superfund law, as well as Texas state law.

EPA identifies the three sites individually as the Odessa site in Odessa, Texas; the Tavenor site in Houston; and the Webster site in Webster, Texas. The sites operated as Gulf Nuclear Inc. until the company filed for bankruptcy in 1992.

According to EPA's website, when Gulf Nuclear went bankrupt, "they walked off leaving several radioactive sources and tons of radioactive waste and contaminated material," including the radionuclides americium-241, cesium-137, cobalt-60 and radium-226.

Gulf Nuclear was the last of several companies that had operated a radioactive material laboratory at the site over a 30-year period, producing materials used in the medical, petrochemical, oil exploration, and other industries, EPA said.

Responsible parties were determined to be DII Industries LLC, Halliburton Energy Services, NL Industries, and Precision Energy Services Inc.

Odessa Site Called Time Critical

When they were brought to EPA's attention in 2000, the Odessa site "was determined to be time critical" and the Webster and Tavenor sites were determined to be "at emergency levels," according to EPA Region 6 spokesman Austin Vela.

Response actions at the sites were carried out under CERCLA, but the sites were never added to EPA's National Priorities List.

Vela explained that the sites were not listed because their hazard rankings were determined after the time-critical and emergency removal actions had taken place, and hazards had been reduced to levels below the threshold for superfund site designation.

"In other words, these sites did not score high enough to be on the NPL list because the removal actions had [already] taken place," he explained.

Cleanup Completed in 2001

In a June 2001 news release, EPA Region 6 said the Texas Natural Resource Conservation Commission, the Texas Bureau of Radiation Control, and the city of Odessa had completed cleanup of the abandoned radioactive materials processing and waste shipment storage facility near Odessa.

More than 700,000 pounds of radioactive material were removed and properly disposed of under the superfund program, according to EPA. The material included "laboratory wastes, lab and office

equipment, 200 gallons of lead shot, tools, soils, septic tanks, the building slab and the building itself," EPA said.

Gulf Nuclear operated from the mid-1970s to 1992. Although the Texas Bureau of Radiation Control maintained security to prevent people from entering the Odessa site, it sat abandoned for eight years until May 2000, when the state requested EPA's assistance in cleaning up the Odessa property and the two associated sites.

The Justice Department will accept public comment on the proposed consent decree until Sept. 24. Comments should be addressed to pubcomment-ees.enrd@usdoj.gov and should refer to *United States and Texas v. Halliburton Energy Services*, D.J. Ref. 90-11-3-07730/1.

By Janice Valverde

The proposed consent decree in United States and Texas v. Halliburton Energy Services is available at <http://op.bna.com/env.nsf/r?Open=jstn-88mtez>.

Contact us at <http://www.bna.com/contact/index.html> or call 1-800-372-1033

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Five years post-Katrina: Record asthma numbers led to new program

By Melanie D.G. Kaplan | Aug 25, 2010 | 0 Comments

In a city already plagued with high rates of childhood asthma, Hurricane Katrina changed the landscape of the disease in New Orleans. Major flooding led to mold, which led to a significant number of children developing asthma symptoms for the first time.

Yesterday I talked with **Dr. Floyd Malveaux**, executive director of the **Merck Childhood Asthma Network, Inc.** (MCAN) and the former dean of the College of Medicine and professor of microbiology and medicine at **Howard University**. MCAN collaborated on a project called **Head-off Environmental Asthma in Louisiana** (HEAL), created to study how mold and other allergens affect children with asthma in post-Katrina New Orleans.

You're studying asthma in children, which is on the rise in urban areas across the nation. Why are you specifically looking at cases in post-Katrina New Orleans?



I was studying asthma in academics most of my professional life and decided to pursue it in a different vein. It's really a public health problem and has become epidemic. When the opportunity presented itself at MCAN, I thought this would be a good way to take lessons learned and actually apply it. I started August 15, 2005, and hurricane occurred two weeks later.

So what were you thinking—about asthma—after you realized the implications of the hurricane?

I'm a native of Louisiana, so my first thought was that I wanted to go down there and give help. [Regarding the asthma], it was obvious. With the flooding there would be a tremendous increase of mold in the air. We expected asthma to get worse. We knew that respiratory problems would be big, and those with a genetic propensity to develop asthma would

experience symptoms for the first time. Even before the hurricane, I knew children had worse asthma in New Orleans than children in many other parts of the country.

What did you find in your research?

It confirmed what we knew: that the mold concentration increased tremendously—in homes and throughout the indoor and outdoor environment.

Many children left the area, which was quite fortuitous. Those who did stay, we worked with them and tested them. We found about 78 percent of those who had asthma were sensitive to molds. It's 50 percent in major urban areas around the country. That was shortly after Katrina. I don't think it's a lot different today, because once you're sensitized you don't lose your sensitivity.

Why is the environment in New Orleans especially bad for those prone to asthma?

This is a problem because New Orleans is already below sea level, but it was made extremely worse by the flooding and the water. Over 80 percent of the city was flooded.

Mold is just one of the things that individuals can be allergic to. Cockroaches can make asthma worse, as can pollen, ragweed, dust mites. But we find that in our urban areas, we're dealing primarily with indoor allergens that seem to be the most important types of things that children react to. If you're in an environment that's quite humid, like New Orleans, there is already a lot of mold in the air. With the flooding, when there was up to eight to 10 feet of water, you're creating a very moist environment. It becomes a big soup, where microorganisms grow. The mold remains in the walls, carpeting and just takes over the entire environment.

How did you manage the increased cases?

We discovered an environment where it was difficult to come in and implement programs that you know work, because it's a disrupted environment. We thought there were two major needs: case management and environmental management. As a result of that, we were able to assist the children, so the symptom levels declined very dramatically. We partnered with **NIH** and were able to work with about 184 families in a little over two years.

After the [HEAL] program ended in 2009 the NIH decided it would not continue the study. But we always felt we would not implement the program and walk away. We wanted to see a program institutionalized and see this incorporated into the health care system.

We made about a \$2 million investment with **Xavier University** to sustain this program [through their Center for Minority Health and Health Disparities Research and Education].

We're now going to help centers throughout New Orleans implement the program among their children who have asthma and see if we can make it a part of the health care system.

You have asthma counselors. What do they do?

They go into the homes and will sit with the family and educate them on how to manage it, how to take the medications, why it's important to go to the doctor on a regular basis. They will inspect the home and identify where there may be mold.

Is it all about treating the asthma, or can things be done to prevent it?

The preventative work is environmental to a great extent. If there's dust mites, you give them encasements that go around mattresses. You talk about not leaving water and food out, which attracts cockroaches. You talk about eliminating leaks where you have dampness and mold. You talk about not smoking in the home and about taking medication. You avoid the triggers, you go for lung testing at specific intervals, and if you do have symptoms, the asthma counselor teaches you how to manage it.

What's the situation there today?

There are still a number of issues. Having access to health care is still a major issue there, and there are still a number of children not enrolled in Medicaid. Then once you have insurance you have to have access to the health care system, which isn't the same thing. I don't think there are a sufficient number of asthma specialists, and many of the children are still using the ER as a primary source of care, and that's not appropriate. There's no hospital on the east side of New Orleans at the present time. These children lost their safety net—Charity Hospital—which closed after Katrina when the first floor flooded. It never opened again.

Have mold levels gone down?

They have gone down. I don't know if they're at pre-Katrina levels, but they have dropped a very significant amount.

Five years later, what have you learned?

We've learned some very important lessons. Certainly among the 184 children—they're doing better. But it's a fraction. That's why it's so important to sustain the program and expand the effort, to reach out to the community health centers and the state and to say, with this program, we can control asthma in New Orleans.

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August 25, 2010

Voters turn down water, sanitation increases

By Andrew Knittle

The Norman Transcript

NORMAN — Norman voters emphatically voted down water and trash rate hikes Tuesday after months of courting by city officials and members of the Norman City Council.

According to the Cleveland County Election Board, the proposed rate hike for the sanitation fund failed, but not as badly as the proposed water rate increase. In total, 58.85 percent of voters, or 5,302 residents, voted against the trash rate hike, while only 41.15 percent voted in favor of it.

The proposed water rate hike failed by a nearly 2-to-1 margin, with only 34.13 percent of residents supporting the rate increase. In total, 5,980 residents, or 65.87 percent, voted against the water rate hike.

Mayor Cindy Rosenthal wasn't pleased with the outcome, but vowed to keep working on the issues that led the city to ask for the rate increases in the first place.

"The election's over, we've heard what the voters have to say," Rosenthal said Tuesday night. "But the financial condition of these two utilities is not changed by the vote."

Rosenthal said both utilities "desperately need" rate hikes, adding that services provided by both may very well be reduced or changed to correspond to a lack of sufficient funds. She also said important capital projects and other long-term maintenance issues will have to be placed on the back burner until funding becomes available.

As for the economy, Rosenthal said she had no doubt it had an effect on the fate of the two proposed rate hikes.

"I think that's a huge part of it, the economy," she said. "Unfortunately, as a city, when we bring a proposition to the voters, we can't make the economic climate any different than it is."

The mayor said council will take the defeat in stride and continue working on the problems facing the city's water and trash services.

"Sure, we're disappointed because council put in many, many long hours putting this together and we spent a lot of time on these things," Rosenthal said. "Tomorrow we'll start looking at how we balance the expenditure side and the revenue side ... that's the challenge we're faced with."

The first round of new rates would have taken effect Oct. 1, with the typical Norman resident paying about \$5 more per month, Finance Director Anthony Francisco said.

New rates would've rolled out over the next three fiscal years, with the larger, initial increases to both services coming Oct. 1.

The next two increases would've taken effect July 1, 2011, and July 1, 2012.

Sanitation rates for residential customers would've increased \$1 each fiscal year, going from \$14.50 to \$17.50 by the end of the three-year period.

The typical residential water customer — those using about 7,000 gallons per month — would've seen a roughly \$2-per-month increase in the first year, followed by smaller increases of about \$1 per month over the next two fiscal years.

Commercial water and sanitation customers would've seen similar hikes had the propositions been approved by voters, city officials said.

Ken Komiske said the sanitation fund, which hasn't seen a hike since 2004, would've used the additional money coming in simply to keep going, citing swollen salaries, insurance and benefits of department employees, higher fuel costs, steeper tipping fees and more expensive garbage trucks.

If the rate hike had been approved, most of the new funds flowing into the water fund would've been used to maintain existing city-owned water supply infrastructure, compensate for the higher price of chemicals used to treat drinking water and meet growing day-to-day operating expenses.

Two percent of the funds would've been used to pay off debt related to Lake Thunderbird, while another 6 percent would've been used to pursue future water supply options — which include bringing water from Lake Sardis in southeast Oklahoma, investing in systems that allow for reuse of drinking water (something not regulated or allowed in Oklahoma at this point) or possibly partnering with the city of Ada to build a new reservoir for both towns to use.

The city could've also used some of that 6 percent to reclaim groundwater wells lost in 2006 when the Environmental Protection Agency lowered what is considered acceptable levels of arsenic in drinking water.

Andrew Knittle 366-3540 aknittle@normantranscript.com

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Aug 24, 2010

Survey: Americans clueless on how best to save energy

12:52 PM

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Many Americans remain clueless about how best to save energy, focusing more on small behavior changes such as turning off lights than on efficiency efforts such as using compact fluorescent light bulbs that have far greater impact, a new survey shows

The largest group, nearly 20%, cited turning off lights as the single best approach although it reduces energy use relatively little, according to the Columbia University survey of 505 American adults in 34 states published last week in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences.



CAPTION

By Justin Sullivan, Getty Images

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Far fewer cited buying decisions known to save far more energy such as more efficient appliances (cited by 3.2%), efficient/hybrid cars (2.8%) and home insulation (cited by 2.1 percent).

"When people think of themselves, they may tend to think of what they can do that is cheap and easy at the moment," said lead author Shahzeen Attari, a postdoctoral fellow at Columbia's Earth Institute and its Center for Research on Environmental Decisions.

The adults surveyed focused nearly five times more on curtailment (turning off lights, driving less) than on efficiency.

"But switching to efficient technologies generally allows you to maintain your behavior, and save a great deal more energy," Attari said in a press release. She said high-efficiency light bulbs can be kept on continuously and still save more energy than turning off incandescents.

Some of the highest-impact decisions, which include driving higher-mileage vehicles and switching from central air conditioning to room air conditioners, were consistently underrated. Central AC uses 3.5 times as much energy as a room unit, although participants estimated it uses 1.3 times as much.

The survey shows many Americans mistakenly believe, for example, that using a clothesline to dry clothes saves more energy than changing the washing machine's settings to cold water.

"Unexpectedly, participants who engaged more in energy-conserving behaviors had less accurate perceptions of energy use and savings, possibly reflecting unrealistic optimism about the effectiveness of their personal energy-saving strategies compared with alternative ones," the report says.

Attari said people typically take one or two actions to address a perceived problem and then think they've done all they

can.

"Of course we should be doing everything we can. But if we're going to do just one or two things, we should focus on the big energy-saving behaviors," she said. "People are still not aware of what the big savers are."

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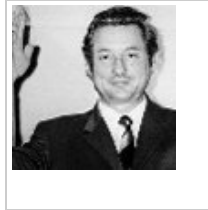
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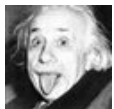
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Survey: The government (pick any one in the U.S.) is clueless on how to save and manage money.

A recent article in the Wall St. Journal describes how state governments use unethical tricks to "balance" their budgets.

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White House: Energy stimulus is working

By Ben Geman - 08/24/10 11:23 AM ET

A White House report unveiled Tuesday says tens of billions of dollars in stimulus energy funding is helping to greatly expand deployment of technologies such as solar power, “smart” electrical meters and advanced batteries.

The Obama administration is touting the projects as Republicans are increasingly charging that the big 2009 stimulus package was ineffective and continuing [attacks on the White House economic team](#). Recent reports by the Energy Department's inspector general also cited [problems with distribution and use of the stimulus dollars](#), including "prevalent and widespread" spending delays.

The White House report ([found here](#)) forecasts the effects of the law that provided \$30 billion for renewable energy and efficiency programs, \$6 billion for advanced vehicles and biofuels programs and billions of dollars in other energy spending.

“Thanks to investments made possible by the Recovery Act, we are unleashing the American innovation machine to change the way we use and produce energy in this country,” said Energy Secretary Steven Chu in a prepared statement. “Just as importantly, these breakthroughs are helping create tens of thousands of new jobs, allowing the U.S. to continue as a leader in the global economy and helping to provide a better future for generations to come.”

According to the White House, the programs will help cut the cost of solar power in half in five years and bring the cost of batteries for electric vehicles down 70 percent by 2015, which is vital to making the vehicles affordable.

“In 2009, the U.S. had only two factories manufacturing advanced vehicle batteries that power electric vehicles and produced less than two percent of the world’s advanced vehicle batteries. The Recovery Act is investing over \$2 billion in advanced battery and electric drive component manufacturing. By 2012, 30 factories with the capacity to produce an estimated 20 percent of the world’s advanced vehicle batteries will exist in the U.S. At full scale, they will produce enough batteries and components to support 500,000 plug-in and hybrid electric vehicles,” the report notes.

The various programs it touts include grants that renewable energy developers can access in lieu of traditional tax credit financing. The tax credits became much less useful during the economic downturn because project funders lacked the profits against which to claim the credits.

For wind power, the grant program “has provided over \$3 billion in payments-in-lieu-of-tax-credits to

more than 100 wind projects in 30 states around the country, totaling 5.3 GW of wind power capacity,” the report states.

Source:

<http://thehill.com/blogs/e2-wire/677-e2-wire/115565-white-house-energy-stimulus-is-working>

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Are Chemical Companies Gaming the Carbon Credit System?

1:00am EDT

A controversy is brewing over whether some chemical companies are abusing a program that gives them carbon credit revenues for destroying a potent greenhouse gas created as a by-product in their operations.

At issue is whether some companies are intentionally overproducing trifluoromethane (HFC-23) in order to destroy it and generate certified emissions reduction (CER) units under the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM). HFC-23 projects account for more than half of all CDM carbon credits sold to date.

The CDM Executive Board said last week it would postpone re-issuing more CERs to five HFC-23 projects until an investigation is completed. The Board asked the chemical companies for production data from the last 10 years. The World Bank, which invested in two of the projects, has released a Q&A document (PDF) defending the projects, saying charges of overproduction lack merit.

HFC-23 is a by-product of HCFC-22, a chemical commonly used in air-conditioning and refrigeration that is more ozone-friendly than previous alternatives. A well-run HCFC-22 plant should have a HFC-23 by-product ratio of around 1 percent, according to Mark Roberts, senior counsel and policy advisor at the Environmental Investigation Agency, an NGO with offices in Washington, D.C. and London.

Chemical companies approved under the CDM can earn credits from destroying HFC-23 if their plants run at a HFC-23 by-product ratio of up to 3 percent. Environmental groups claim at least two plants allowed their HFC-23 by-product ratio, also called the w-factor, to fall significantly when their annual crediting periods ended, yet they continued producing HCFC-22.

Twelve of the 19 companies operated until the end of crediting period then stopped production of HCFC-22 until the next crediting period began, Roberts said in a phone interview Monday, "indicating if they weren't getting credit, it wasn't worth producing HCFC-22."

HFC-23 is far more potent than carbon dioxide. Destroying it is lucrative because the cost to destroy it is just a fraction of the revenue they earn from selling the carbon credits through the CDM. Most of the facilities are based in China and India, with the remaining located Argentina, Mexico and South Korea.

Under the Kyoto Protocol, the CDM allows countries with a carbon reduction commitment to buy carbon credits from projects in developing countries in order to contain compliance costs and support sustainable development. It has come under fire in recent years over whether some projects would have moved forward without the carbon credit revenues. Some critics have called for the CDM to be scrapped post-Kyoto, while others are advocating it instead be refined.

"People have been really critical of the CDM, which is why I think the Executive Board is taking this as seriously as they are," Roberts said. "How they respond is going to (impact) how much people are going to invest in it going forward."

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Carbon trade lobby calls for rule clarity from EU

10:48am EDT

LONDON (Reuters) - An emissions trading lobby group has called for the European Commission to clarify rules on UN-backed carbon offset use in the third phase of its emissions trading scheme in order to boost ebbing market confidence. In an open letter to EU Climate Commissioner Connie Hedegaard on Tuesday, the International Emissions Trading Association urged the commission to rule the number and types of offsets that scheme participants can use between 2013-2020 should the bloc adopt a deeper 2020 emissions cut target.

"A vital principle of private financing appears to have been lost: the need to guarantee regulatory certainty and business continuity for investors," said IETA President and CEO Henry Derwent.

The EU is currently considering whether to raise to 30 percent its current pledge to cut greenhouse gas emissions by 20 percent below 1990 levels by 2020. A decision is due in the autumn.

Key to either goal is the bloc's trading scheme. Firms must submit permits for their emissions, but they can also use cheaper offsets, which are generated through investment in low-carbon clean energy under the Kyoto Protocol's Clean Development Mechanism (CDM), for part of the requirement.

The EU is mulling restricting the use of some types of CDM offsets from 2013 as well as barring those from developing countries that lag in their carbon-cutting efforts.

IETA, which wants clarity on these rules, warned that ongoing uncertainty would lead to a further reduction in private sector investment in the CDM.

"The only existing mechanism to incentivise private sector low-carbon investment in developing countries is the CDM," Derwent said. "The EU has been key for the development of the CDM. Yet largely as a result of decisions taken or expected by the EU, market confidence in the CDM is at very low ebb."

IETA also wants the EU to introduce new market mechanisms including green bonds and carbon offsets for nuclear energy, avoided deforestation and plants that capture and store greenhouse gas.

(Reporting by [Michael Szabo](#); Editing by Jane Baird)

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Tuesday, Aug 24, 2010

Posted on Tue, Aug. 24, 2010

NM ranchers sue over changes in wolf program

By SUE MAJOR HOLMES

Ranching groups and two southern New Mexico counties are suing over a program that's reintroducing Mexican gray wolves into the wild in New Mexico and Arizona.

Their lawsuit alleges the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the state Department of Game and Fish have violated federal law by altering program rules without a new environmental review.

The lawsuit asks a federal judge to stop the changes until the agencies comply with the law.

It was filed by Americans for the Preservation of the Western Environment, the Adobe and Beaverhead ranches, rancher Alan Tackman, the Gila (HEE'-lah) National Forest Livestock Permittees' Association, and the Otero and Catron county commissions.

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Scene of Midwest's Worst Oil Spill – Sleepless Nights and Black Goo

August 23, 2010

A first-hand report from communities affected by Enbridge pipeline rupture on Kalamazoo River.



Images courtesy Environmental Protection Agency
Oiled vegetation floats upstream of the Ceresco Dam. Click image to launch slideshow.

By Sam and Michael LaSusa
Special to Circle of Blue

Michigan's LaSusa brothers Sam, 17, and Michael, 20, traveled to communities affected by the Enbridge pipeline rupture along the Kalamazoo River in late July. They met with local landowners and clean-up volunteers to find out how people responded to the Midwest's worst oil spill.

As we neared Marshall, Mich., where the largest oil spill ever in the Midwest occurred late last month, we noticed a cardboard box by the side of the road. Scrawled across it was "Oil Spill Donations Here." It rested beside a large tent with a mountainous collection of bottled water and a few dozen buckets of Tide. Piles of old towels, rags and linens lay in the parking lot along with a collection of tanks and animal cages. My brother Sam, a photographer, was driving. I told him to pull off the road.

We exited the car into a muggy, early-morning stillness that was broken only by the click of Sam's camera as he documented the collection of supplies.

I rubbed the sleep from my eyes and looked around as a soft voice came from inside the tent. It was Deb Jenkins, an organizer for the Kalamazoo Wildlife Oil Spill Donation Center. Jenkins' donation drive is currently Michigan's only official wildlife aid site for the recent Kalamazoo River oil spill. Many animals that live in the Kalamazoo River and surrounding floodplain have been affected by the leak.

Jenkins took action with her husband Dave after they received a Facebook message about the pipe burst.

"We took our flashlights out and took a look and we were seeing what was going on," Dave Jenkins said, "We were going to go out and start cleaning the animals ourselves."

The Jenkins duo recruited some friends, including Matt Davis and John Face, to place more emphasis on wildlife rescue. Their first step was creating a Facebook page. In 12 hours more than 200 people signed up to support their cause.

A Lot of Oil

According to federal authorities, 1 million gallons of oil spilled into Talmadge Creek, a tributary of the Kalamazoo River, from a ruptured pipeline owned by Enbridge Inc., a Canadian energy delivery company that operates world's longest crude oil and liquids pipeline system. Roughly 1,900 miles of that pipeline comprises the Lakehead system, which includes the line where the rupture occurred. Enbridge claims to have more than 400 employees, contractors and volunteers working on the cleanup. Enbridge President and CEO, Pat Daniel, has promised to do "whatever it takes" to clean up the spill, including fully reimbursing governmental agencies for their efforts. Daniel, who resides in Calgary, Canada, has remained in Michigan since the spill was discovered.

On July 28, the Jenkinsses, along with Davis and Face, set up their tent at the Crossroads church. They receive donations at all hours of the day.

"We haven't slept much since," Dave said. The Jenkinsses and other volunteers spend days cataloging, organizing, boxing and transporting them. Physical donations, such as the towels, soap and water, are taken to a cleaning site about half a mile from the church, while monetary donations are pooled into the Kalamazoo River Environmental Relief Fund.

"[The money] is not going up to the cleaning station, it's not going to Enbridge," said Deb Jenkins. "Once the river starts getting cleaner...it's going to be for new vegetation, new animals...and getting our river back to the way it was."

Even the Jenkins' son, Shawn, is volunteering at the wildlife cleaning operation. Roughly 100 animals—including geese, swans, ducks and turtles—have been captured and cleaned as of late July, according to The Battle Creek Enquirer. To reduce the stress put on the animals and increase their chances of survival, access to the cleaning site is restricted. Meanwhile the Michigan Department of Natural Resources and the Environment has five fishery crews on the river searching for fish kills.



Photo courtesy Sam LaSusa

Vacuum trucks and skimmers work along a 30-mile stretch of river affected by the rupture. The Environmental Protection Agency estimates that it will take at least another five months to remove oil from the water and surrounding vegetation.

Feds Investigate

The United States Department of Transportation had issued Enbridge a warning letter in January regarding corrosion in Line 6B of their Lakehead system, where the leak occurred. Enbridge submitted evidence in response, and indicated that they were improving how the pipeline was monitored.

Meanwhile the Obama administration had repeatedly warned Enbridge about safety issues along its Lakehead pipeline system, even arranging a meeting earlier this year with company officials regarding a “series of major failures,” the Battle Creek Enquirer, a local paper, reported.

Although Enbridge submitted evidence that they had put steps in place to improve the monitoring of the pipeline’s condition, the letter stated, “The information provided does not demonstrate compliance with the above regulation...Under 49 United States Code § 60122, you are subject to a civil penalty not to exceed \$100,000 for each violation for each day the violation persists up to a maximum of \$1,000,000 for any related series of violations.” However, the PHMSA “decided not to conduct additional enforcement action or penalty assessment proceedings at this time,” citing “positive steps being taken to improve Enbridge’s internal corrosion mitigation and monitoring program,” which included updates the system that were scheduled for completion within the first half of this year.

Seven investigators from the National Transportation Safety Bureau arrived in the area on July 27 to determine the cause of the accident. On August 2, Peter Knudson, an agency spokesman, presented the most recent findings at a public meeting at Marshall High School.

According to Knudson, in the early evening on July 25 the Enbridge control center in Edmonton reported a planned shutdown of Line 6B of their Lakehead system that was to remain in effect for approximately 10 hours. Early in the morning the following day oil began flowing through the line again, as scheduled. Less than three hours later Enbridge shut down the pipeline and did not bring it back online. Several hours later the Enbridge control center in Edmonton, Alberta received a call from a Consumer’s Energy utility worker who reported spotting oil. Knudson did not elaborate on the location of the sighting nor Enbridge’s reaction or response to this call.

The NTSB interviewed three firemen from Marshall who responded to 911 calls received Sunday evening regarding suspicious odors in the area. A caller driving by the local airport near Talmadge Creek described a gas-like smell permeating the town around 9:30 pm. The fire department responded to the call, but was not able to detect anything with their instruments. Reports that an Enbridge truck had been seen in the area Sunday night have been published in local newspapers, but Knudson backed up Enbridge’s denial of those claims, stating that investigators determined that the truck in question actually belonged to Michigan Gas.

Enbridge stated that they discovered the leak at 9:45 am on July 26. They reported it to the national oil spill response center managed by the Coast Guard less than four hours later. The company says that the gap between their discovery of the leak and their report to the response center was due the need for them to “quantify” the leak before reporting it.

In a July 29 interview with WOOD TV, Rep. Mark Schauer (D-Battle Creek) said: “The pipeline company has been irresponsible from the start. This started Sunday night. They did not...declare it an incident until 9:45 Monday morning. But just as bad, or even worse for the response, they didn’t report it to federal authorities until 1:33 pm...They knew there was a problem Sunday night and didn’t contact federal authorities of a problem until 1:30 the following afternoon.”

Alice Sims, a five-year resident of Marshall and a volunteer at the Kalamazoo Wildlife Oil Spill Donation Center questions the legitimacy of the report.

“The timing of their report is skeptical. Even if they didn’t know about it Sunday [July 25], they knew about it Monday morning. So, why did it take them all day to report it?” Sims said.



Photo courtesy Sam LaSusa

More than a week after the Enbridge Inc. oil spill along the Kalamazoo River, a “sheen” near the shoreline is still evident. Cleanup costs for the one million gallon-spill are estimated at more than \$100 million.

Oil Everywhere

Evidence of the spill is easy to find. We ventured to a dam at Ceresco, which is about eight miles west of the donation site. As we approached the dam, we could smell benzene in the air. As we rounded a corner, we saw a police car parked at the bridge’s entrance. Trucks with vacuum lines were sucking up the remaining “sheen” oil from the water. Officials claim that the oil has been contained to an area between the spill site and Morrow Lake, about 30 miles downstream. But when water levels rise again, any oil that has not been removed will be swept back into the river. Additional back-up booms have been placed downstream from the lake in case extremely heavy rainfall pushes the oil further.

I spoke with a resident whose house is less than 200 ft from the dam. He declined to be quoted or have his name published, but he allowed us to take pictures from his property. Years ago, the resident had cleared a few hundred square feet of dense forest from his back yard in order to be able to see the river from his home. Now a giant pond of dark, oily water sat in his yard while the slick, shiny river ran past it. We had to speak loudly to hear each other over the growling engines of the vacuum trucks on the dam.

The resident mentioned that in the days before the spill, the surrounding area had received heavy rainfall. This resulted in higher water levels on the river. After the water level fell oil lingered on every surface that had been submerged—black goo coated plants, low-hanging tree branches and shoreline soil.

But the owner of the riverside property said that he was not angry with Enbridge.

That was a common sentiment. Despite confusion and skepticism surrounding what Enbridge knew about the leak, and the time it took them to report the information to the proper authorities, many residents said they have been satisfied with the company’s clean-up efforts and the governmental agencies that are assisting them.

According to Mark Durno, the deputy on-site director for the EPA, 91,000 feet of booms have been deployed on the river to capture the “sheen” oil that still remains after vacuum trucks and oil skimmers retrieved and contained most of the original spill. Durno estimates that it might take up to several months to clean up the remaining sheen.

“We’re not going to sugarcoat it,” Durno said during a town meeting at Marshall High School. “That marshy area [around Talmadge Creek, where the spill happened] still looks bad.”

Meanwhile EPA regional director Susan Hedman promised the audience at the Marshall High School meeting that the river would be restored to its pre-spill condition.

Enbridge has offered to purchase more than 200 homes that were for sale before the spill near the 30-mile stretch of river that has been affected by the leak. The company has also paid for some residents to be temporarily relocated, as well as donated bottled water to those uncomfortable drinking tap water.



Images courtesy Environmental Protection Agency

An aerial view of oil sheen from contaminated vegetation at the Ceresco Dam area, between the spill site and Battle Creek, Michigan. Click image to launch slideshow.

Understanding Community

Although testing has determined that local well water is safe for consumption, use of water from the contaminated portion of the river and from Morrow Lake for drinking, irrigation and recreation has been banned until further notice.

Before returning to Marshall for the EPA update, Sam and I took a trip to Plainwell, in Allegan County, downriver from Morrow Lake where the spill had been stopped. According to Bill Bomar, Plainwell's Director of Public Safety, the city lies within an EPA "superfund" site—a federal program that cleans up the nation's uncontrolled hazardous waste sites. Contaminated water being removed from the river consists of polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) that were used in the paper mills in the area. Although oil from the spill that reaches the superfund site could complicate both clean up projects, officials say the oil is well-contained.

Sarah Wagenaar, 30, of Kalamazoo was visiting Plainwell the same day as us. Wagenaar said she grew up weary of the river because of PCB contamination and other pollution, "Since we were kids, everybody always told us not to swim or fish or anything in the [Kalamazoo] river," she said

However, Ceresco residents Jeri Wood and Frankie Payette, who live near the dam, claim that before the spill many locals swam and fished in the river without concern for pollution.



Photo courtesy Sam LaSusa

Standing oil has gathered in plant-heavy areas, such as lily pads located in front of Ceresco Dam.

Payette said she called Consumer's Energy during the evening on July 25 to report a strange smell. And while someone inspected the site that night, Enbridge didn't take action until the next day, Payette added.

"So far [the clean-up] is pretty good," said Wood. "I feel bad for the animals, but the whole community just came together. I mean, somebody has got to do it"

The long-term effects of the spill are hard to predict, but the dedicated response from the local community, Enbridge and the EPA has certainly improved the outlook.

As Payette put it, "You just have to pick up and go on."

Sam LaSusa is a junior at Traverse City's St. Francis High School. Michael LaSusa, a junior at the University of Miami in Florida, majors in journalism. Reach Michael at mlasusa2000@yahoo.com. Read more about America's involvement in tar sands oil development on [Circle of Blue](#).

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Wastewater project under way in Seneca

By Amye Buckley
Neosho Daily News

Posted Aug 23, 2010 @ 04:00 AM

Seneca, Mo. — Preliminary dirt preparation has started on a wastewater project in the works for seven years.

Seneca passed a bond issue nearly two years ago for its construction, but because the Missouri town treats its waste across the border in Oklahoma plans had to go through agencies for both states.

Sewage treatment procedures are regulated by the Oklahoma Department of Environmental Quality, but collection is governed by the Missouri Department of Natural Resources.

Mayor Gary Roark said Seneca is on a tight time-frame to get the project finished, now that they have final approval from DEQ. The Oklahoma requirements kept pushing the price tag higher.

"Oklahoma kept coming up with additional things, redundant features," Roark said.

The bid was awarded to keep Seneca eligible for grants already awarded. The low bid they accepted from Branco was \$6.3 million, but it was pared down by \$467,000 to help the city afford construction. DEQ approved a few changes in construction and they changed some procedures to arrive at the new figure. Roark said he's stressed to the construction company that they cannot afford cost overruns. The total project will cost \$7.379 million including engineering and inspection fees, a contingency fund and sludge removal from some of the lagoons.

To build behind all the existing lagoons would have put the project in the floodplain. The project will be built on two western reserve lagoons, already demolished for construction.

A pump station in front of the current lagoons will pump waste into the new plant and the old lagoons will hold extra storm water flow.

Right now, there is some geotechnical work going on, contractors are getting a stone base in place and forming everything up. It will probably be a few months before they start to pour concrete at the site.

"The tanks are pretty good-sized so it takes a lot of soils and foundation work," said Chris Erisman, project engineer with Allgeier, Martin & Associates Inc.

The two big tanks are 80-feet in diameter and approximately 23-feet deep. Two sludge storage tanks will be 50-foot across.

There will be two phases to the project. By Aug. 1 next year the main plant will come online and be treating sewage and two smaller storage tanks will be in place by Dec. 28.

Currently, Seneca treats its wastewater in a series of lagoons. The new wastewater treatment system will include a new mechanical wastewater treatment with an influent lift station, flow equalization basins, a mechanical bar screen, a manual bar screen, a grit chamber, a grit removal system, two aeration basins, two clarifiers, two aerobic digesters, an ultraviolet disinfection system and a cascade aerator.

The improvements will be funded by the November 2007 bond issue and, through the Missouri Department of Natural Resources, a state direct loan and grants.

The \$6.6 million in Missouri awards consists of a \$4.2 million in low-interest loans and grants — a \$2 million state 40 percent construction grant and a \$400,000 rural sewer grant.

Roark said the city is trying to keep costs consistent for the people in Seneca.

Water is metered, but sewer — except for its largest corporate users — is based on an average from lower usage winter months.

"When we put this bond before the residents we told them the max of what sewer payments were going to be," Roark said.

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DAILY TRIBUNE

Print Page

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Franklin County issues burn ban

MOUNT VERNON-County Commissioners issued a burn ban today for Franklin County.

According to a spokesman from the Texas Forestry Service, Franklin's burn ban marks the first in the Linden Dispatch Zone, which includes the Northeast Texas counties of Titus, Franklin, Camp, Morris, Cass, Marion, Red River, Upshur, Wood, Harrison, Gregg, and Bowie.

A burn ban prohibits outdoor burning in the unincorporated area of the county for 90 days, unless the County Commissioners officially lift the restriction earlier.

This order does not prohibit outdoor burning activities related to public health and safety that are authorized by the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality for firefighter training; public utility, natural gas pipeline or mining operations; planting or harvesting of agricultural crops; or, burns that are conducted by a prescribed burn manager.

Violation of this order is considered a Class C misdemeanor, punishable by a fine not to exceed \$500.00.

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Aug 23, 5:39 PM EDT

Anxiety still rampant in Katrina kids, study says

By JANET McCONNAUGHEY and LINDSEY TANNER
Associated Press Writers

NEW ORLEANS (AP) -- A startling number of Gulf coast area children displaced by Hurricane Katrina still have serious emotion problems five years later, a new study found.

More than one in three children studied - those forced to flee their homes because of the August 2005 storm - have since been health problems. These are children who moved to trailer parks and other emergency housing.

Nearly half of families studied still report household instability, researchers said.

"If children are bellwethers of recovery, then the social systems supporting affected Gulf Coast populations are still far from having Hurricane Katrina," the researchers said.

The study was published online Monday in the journal Disaster Medicine and Public Health Preparedness.

Lead author David Abramson of Columbia University said researchers were astonished by the level of distress.

Children are "a bit of canary in a coal mine in that they really represent a failure or a dysfunction of many, many other systems," Abramson, who is with Columbia's National Center for Disaster Preparedness.

About 500,000 people, including more than 160,000 children, weren't able to return to their homes for at least three months after 29, 2005.

At least 20,000 of those children still have serious emotional disorders or behavior problems, or don't have a permanent home,

"Five years after Katrina, there are still tens of thousands of children and their families who are still living in limbo with a significant psychological well-being," said co-author Irwin Redlener, also with the Columbia center. In addition, he is president of the Child advocacy group that paid for the study.

Without significant government help, Redlener said, these children are likely to have even greater problems as adults.

Psychologist Joy Osofsky of Louisiana State University's Health Sciences Center agreed, but said it was important to note that children are much more resilient than those from the extremely poor families Redlener is studying.

Osofsky, who has been working with children at St. Bernard, Plaquemines and Orleans parish schools since the storm, said Redlener's study shows the effects of poverty, the trauma of Katrina trauma and what followed.

Redlener's group has been periodically studying 1,079 families in Louisiana and Mississippi since February 2006, six months after the storm. The latest interviews, from November 2009 through March, involved families with children between ages 5 and 18.

Over the five years, 38 percent out of 427 children have been diagnosed with anxiety, depression or a behavior disorder since the hurricane, five times more likely than children from similar families evaluated before the hurricane.

The percentage of newly diagnosed children has declined in each round of interviews but the numbers are still almost double those of before, Abramson said.

Almost half of the households either were living in transient housing or had no guarantee that they'd be in their current quarters.

In separate research, Osofsky has looked at about 5,000 fourth- through 12th-grade children screened last year in St. Bernard, Orleans parish schools. Of that group, 31 percent showed some symptoms of depression or post-traumatic stress, but only 12 percent had individual or group counseling. The school-based program doesn't diagnose children, she said.

Redlener wants more mental health services available to children, government action to get the families into safe and stable housing support for the families. He also says governments need to quickly collect information about children and families hurt by disaster can be helped as long as they need it.

"We know governments, state and federal, are dealing with a very deep recession...", he said. On the other hand, he said, "It's and the 'later' is extraordinarily expensive."

AP Medical Writer Lindsey Tanner contributed to this story from Chicago.

Online:

Children's Health Fund: <http://www.childrenshealthfund.org/>

Columbia University's National Center for Disaster Preparedness: <http://www.ncdp.mailman.columbia.edu/>

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Asarco's costly aftermath: Cleanup first, then long-term planning

By Chris Roberts \ EL PASO TIMES

Posted: 08/22/2010 12:00:00 AM MDT

» From the photo archive: ASARCO photos 1948-1990

Creative uses suggested for the old Asarco smelter include trendy marketplaces and solar farms. But before those dreams are realized, more than a century's worth of toxic waste must be cleaned or contained.

In the next few weeks, Project Navigator, a California group responsible for overseeing the cleanup, will send a plan to the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality for approval. A 2009 report by the commission outlined possible remedial actions and their costs. Although Project Navigator is not bound by the recommendations, they were used to determine a cleanup cost of more than \$52 million.

Asarco then placed that amount and the property in a custodial trust.

Some say \$52 million is not enough to clean the industrial site that was used for more than 110 years. The depth of contamination requires that

some cleanup "be performed in perpetuity," which the commission defined as 400 to 500 years.

In 1887, when the smelter opened, it was one of the first of its kind. It started with a daily capacity of 150 tons of ore. Metals processed at the plant into the mid-1980s and early '90s included lead, cadmium, antimony and zinc. When copper prices dropped, the plant was no longer profitable, and Asarco closed

it in 1999.

During the plant's operation, slag -- a crusty waste separated from molten metals -- filled arroyos on the site. The main contaminants in slag are arsenic, lead and cadmium. Smaller concentrations of chromium, copper, iron, selenium and zinc also are found. In at least one case, the slag reaches a depth of 60 feet.

Former Asarco workers have developed illnesses such as multiple sclerosis and persistent rashes that they suspect resulted from prolonged exposures to the contaminants. In addition, water running down the arroyos has leached some of those contaminants into the groundwater.

Two separate diesel spills also contributed to groundwater contamination, according to commission records. In February 1990, inspectors found tanks that were leaking into the American Canal, which supplies El Paso with residential and agricultural water. In March of that year,

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Asarco employees found another leaking diesel tank.

Monitor wells near the second spill show significant groundwater contamination. A plume of contaminated water stretches for nearly a mile under the site, the report stated.

City officials said the contamination poses no threat to El Paso's drinking water.

"We expend a great deal of time and resources to assure that our water meets the high standards of the Safe Water Drinking Act," said Christina Montoya, an El Paso Water Utilities spokeswoman. "The treatment plants have a tremendous ability to remove contaminants from the Rio Grande."

Environmental activists, though, say information about illegal releases of toxic material has been withheld from the public, making it difficult to know how to clean the site and how much it will cost.

In 1994 and 1995, state compliance inspectors found unauthorized discharges of solid waste, wastewater and stormwater at the Asarco site. In April 1999, the EPA and the state alleged that Asarco had mismanaged hazardous waste and illegally burned it.

Some of that material was from the Rocky Mountain Arsenal, where nerve gases and pesticides were made. Asarco paid a \$5.5 million penalty without an admission of guilt, but no

definitive list of contaminants incinerated at the plant was released.

"Until they tell us what chemicals were out there and they are honest with us, then we really don't know what we're dealing with," said Heather McMurray, a Sierra Club member who has tracked activities at the plant. She said testing planned for the site is limited in scope and unlikely to reveal previously undetected contaminants.

The biggest and most expensive task, according to the report, will be catching and purifying contaminated ground water now seeping into the Rio Grande. That would cost an estimated \$22 million.

Trustee Roberto Puga, who leads the cleanup effort, did not return calls requesting an interview for this story.

Arsenic, lead and cadmium were found in concentrations above national drinking-water standards. Arsenic, the most prevalent, was measured at 6,200 times that standard, the report stated.

The Texas Commission on Environmental Quality proposed a 3,000-foot-long "slurry wall" along West Paisano Drive that locks into the bedrock, 60 feet below in spots. It would trap contaminated groundwater in an area with the highest metal concentrations. The "wall" is actually a trench with a coating that slows the flow of groundwater toward the river.

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Contaminated water would be pumped out of the ground through 80 wells, 30 of which are in place. That water would be treated in an on-site plant.

Treated water would be injected into the Mesilla Bolson, a large aquifer under the plant that runs to Las Cruces. This would require a special 800-foot well.

Stabilizing or removing the slag would be nearly as expensive.

More than 300,000 cubic yards of the most contaminated slag would be deposited in a new \$5.8 million landfill. That would include powdery waste on the site that could be dispersed by the wind and relatively easily leached into ground and river water, the report stated.

The rest, nearly 60 acres of slag, would be stabilized with about \$10 million of asphalt paving.

"Since the facility has been in operation for over 100 years, there is a high probability that contaminants may be discovered outside the investigation area," the report stated.

"Therefore, the (commission) intends to pave the majority of the plant area to prevent any potential exposure."

The report recommended that all buildings be demolished at a cost of about \$8.9 million. This would allow the agency "to address any

contamination under or within such buildings and structures." That amounts to more than 455,000 square feet of steel, brick, concrete and other structures.

A rail trestle and two bridges, including one that crosses Interstate 10, also would be destroyed.

Most telling are the long-range cost estimates.

It will take more than 50 years to remove most of the groundwater contaminants at a cost of \$563,000 a year, the report stated.

Work that will have to be performed for 400 to 500 years includes groundwater monitoring and asphalt repair to make sure the landfills are properly isolated. That would cost about \$41,000 a year. The cost of fence repair and other necessary activities is estimated at \$40,000 annually.

An additional \$12,024 each year in perpetuity would be spent for commission inspection and travel costs.

Most of the money for long-term work would come from interest paid on the \$52 million, according to commission officials.

Chris Roberts may be reached at chrisr@elpasotimes.com; 546-6136.

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